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THE AUTHOR AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN
(From a painting by Harold Knight)

OIL PAINT AND GREASE PAINT

Autobiography of
LAURA KNIGHT

NEW YORK
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1936

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TO
HAROLD KNIGHT

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BOOK I

CHAPTER I

A.B.C.

I WAS not, as most people think, born in a circus, suckled by an elephant; neither was I a Risley kid, to be tossed on the feet of an acrobat.

Mother's greatest desire in life was that I should be an artist. During those months before I was born she painted and drew, praying that her own passion might influence the child lying in her womb. With the milk from her breast I drew in the fire of ambition. Her own thwarted desires were poured into me. As a girl she had studied at an art school and later on in Paris.

Mother's marriage at seventeen had been an unhappy one, and when my father died soon after I was born she was told, "Dry your tears; it is for the best."

One of the greatest moments of Mother's life came when she found that I, a mere baby, was never so content as with pencil and paper; even before I could speak or walk I drew. There was no question of my purpose in life. I remember her saying when I was only a few years old, "You will be elected to the Royal Academy one day."

Mother's name was Charlotte Johnson; she had three daughters, Nellie and Sissie and me; I was the youngest. She had gone back to her old home to live before I was born.

My first sketch-book was an old factory ledger. Its leaves on one side were filled with figures in a fine handwriting; the blanks I filled with figures of a different sort.

My first memory is sitting on my great-grandmother's knee—an old brown nut-cracker face, a black cap with ribbons and lace hanging over the ears, a shawl and black

silk apron, red-mittened hands, long reins flopping above, clip-clop of horse's hooves. We were being driven in a hansom cab from Long Eaton, where I was born, to Nottingham, and were going to live in No. 9 Noel Street, a blue slated semi-detached house, one of a row going down the hill in steps. I was put to sleep in a drawer pulled out of the kitchen dresser—I remember the smell of new wood.

Our grandmother slept in the front room over the dining-room and hall. Uncle Arthur's room was next to it and on his mantelshelf was a row of eau-de-Cologne bottles, one or two of which he smuggled every time he came back from France; in a corner lay a pair of heavy dumb-bells, used after his bath. Great-grandmother's room was close to the head of the stairs; she went down backwards, clinging to the banisters, for she was more than ninety years old. Mother and her children shared the top floor. Mother's studio ran over the house next door, which belonged to Mr. Gutteridge, our landlord, whose eldest son was called Gladstone. The Lees lived next door; Mr. Lee was a retired publican—"The Barley Corn" must have been a wonderful house of call to judge by the pride the family still had in its splendours. One son's name was Percy; he was called "ar Purse," the possessive pronoun, pronounced "ar," preceded all their names, and they spoke in the Midlands dialect, so we were not allowed to play with them lest our accent should be contaminated.

Our family came chiefly from Derbyshire, farmer and yeomen stock. It was and had for some generations past been engaged in the lace trade. "Trade's bad this year," was a phrase often repeated—France had put a tariff on the import—we grew poorer and poorer every year.

Grandma, head of the household, was always ready to help in any emergency, even at night; she was a bad sleeper. We all had quilts she had made while others were in bed. Even when we were rich Grandma washed and ironed all my uncle's shirts and collars: no one could do them so well as she. There were many in the wash every week, for Uncle

changed every time he came home from the works; he was a bit of a dandy and liked to cut a dash among the other men of the town.

"Mrs. Bates, you are a marvel," we used to say, mimicking what we had often heard her friends exclaim. I was proud when they added: "Laura takes after you in looks"; she was an imposing figure with a gentle expression in her bright blue eyes. She always wore a white lace cap half covering her satiny white hair twisted in loops over the ears and drawn into a knob at the back, like Queen Victoria's—Grandma was supposed to resemble the Queen, although she was considerably taller than Her Majesty. We called our grandmother "Big Grandma" and our great-grandmother "Little Grandma."

We envied our playmates who could be noisy at home. We had to keep quiet on account of Little Grandma, and I do not remember ever feeling free from responsibility; as it happened it was our lot to be brought up from infancy to face the sterner side of life; we shared with our elders sights, experiences and troubles usually hidden from children.

The Lees went to the seaside every summer; we used to watch them enviously as they packed their spades and clanking pails into a horse-cab—they had, too, new frocks for the Mayor's Ball every Christmas, but Mother had no money to provide these pleasures for us. She had been left with nothing, and in payment for our education she taught drawing and painting at Brincliffe School on the Forest Road; the Boys' High School was next to it and often a football would come over the high wall which separated their big playground from ours—we always kept their ball till our playtime was over. I did not then know Harold Knight, who was on the other side.

Mother held other classes and taught young ladies how to copy flowers on to stools, fire-screens and palm-leaf fans; she also painted pictures when she had time and usually attended the life class at the School of Art in the evening.

She took good care of us, nursed us in illness, made our clothes and her own as well. I never saw her idle; if doing nothing else, she attended lectures or studied French. "Work hard, for to-day never comes again," was a saying of hers that haunts me to this day. "You must make yourselves capable of independence later on," she dinned into us.

It was a severe upbringing; in spite of all we were happy. No one ever had a mother so just and so good.

All three of us were excitable, but I was passionate as well, apt to be immoderate, to "let go" and play the fool, to race about and scream with laughter. "Laugh in the morning, cry at night," Grandma used to say.

I shared the family's disappointment at not being a boy, because being stronger physically than most girls, I found their games too tame; I was often punished for coming home ripped and bleeding after a wild adventure with rough boys, a strictly forbidden pleasure; and was the only girl who in winter went on the very long slides on the Forest Hills—it was hard not to twist round when slithering into the gutter at the end.

It may be that this boisterousness has shown itself in my work. From earliest student days I have been accused of having too heavy a hand for a woman.

In our home, unusual influences were at work. Uncle's men friends were also our friends. There was John Cruickshank, who had a potent effect on all our characters—a Scotsman with a red, pointed beard. He could lift the biggest of us with one hand, right above his head, and was a gloriously unconventional man, a Pied Piper, with a cigarette instead of a pipe; children followed him in troops as he scattered pennies in the streets, for his pockets were always crammed with supplies of "goodies" and nougat. We were never short of material to draw on; he was a paper merchant—the stacks of folded samples he brought for us were, like the sweetstuffs, inexhaustible. My uncle and he never thought or acted quite like other men; both he and Mr. Cruickshank were "unexpected"—no one knew the

extent of Mr. Cruickshank's influence, he was always so full of fun. In those days of hard drinking among men he consorted with all kinds of people—publicans and sinners—himself a teetotaller, the ideal of all who came in contact with him. We worshipped Mr. Cruickshank, and my imagination gave his features to God.

Bill Stevenson, another of Uncle's friends, never came without books for us. In my ledger he drew capital letters ornamented with scrolls which I copied over and over again. Phil Bailey, son of Philip Bailey, the author of *Festus*, often came. Uncle loved to display my ability and I had to draw portraits of all his friends.

Although we were very fond of Uncle, we were more than a little frightened of him, because he was apt to be severe, and he made such a noise if anything went wrong. He was always teasing. "I've got a better face than yours put away in an old cupboard, and I'd scorn to use it," he used to say.

Uncle was the masterful male in the house; everyone deferred to him except Mother, who also liked to have her own way; a slight jar existed such as there is apt to be between brother and sister living together in unusual circumstances.

I was praised for the humour in school compositions for which Mr. Cruickshank and Uncle were generally responsible. Uncle could even teach drawing! I never could make a foot full face till he taught me: "Just put two lines down for the leg and a flat lump on the end, and there you have it." He taught me, too, how to act in the school plays; he fancied he had gifts himself in that direction. All recitations were rehearsed with him, his ideal being noise and flinging his arms about, which I delighted in copying, and when his friends came I was lifted on to the table to say "The boy stood on the burning deck"; that piece of poetry and certain odd compositions by Thomas Hood were my favourites. The applause and laughter that followed my imitations of Uncle's violence together with the success I had at various

entertainments competed with my allegiance to the art of painting.

We had no nursery—all discussions among the grown-up people were overheard by us till our minds became filled with undigested ideas about religion and politics. At eight years old I kept a cousin awake one night to tell her that Queen Victoria spent all the country's money, the Bible was all lies and God a myth, till at three o'clock in the morning she burst into tears.

Both Nellie and Sis were fond of drawing, but for me it was a perfect passion—paper was always hidden under my exercise books, to scribble on every chance I got—I would give up any pleasure for its sake and my zeal delighted Mother. At the end of school-term she used to say: "Laura, your drawings are much the best, but I can't always give the prize to you," which praise was reward enough.

Poor Mother, often at the end of the term, she had not even a copper left for her tram fares, and as we grew Nellie's dresses were worn by Sis and then came down to me—generally they reached down nearly to my ankles; it was hard to bear other children's ridicule when their third generation was achieved. . . .

Lack of money was a nightmare from which there was no waking, even for the children—we dreamed about it at night. More and more economies had to be made: first of all the old soldier who blacked the boots and did the odd jobs had to go; at fair time and Christmas he had always brought us presents of sugar pigs, pulling them unwrapped out of his dirty pocket. The cook went next; I used to get astride her bustle when she stood at the dresser making pastry—that made her mad. My first important drawing was of her and the kitchen; a problem in perspective, for I wanted to include all four walls, the ceiling, the floor and the little round table close to the grate where Little Grandma often sat in her black lace and ribbon cap, shawl and apron; she liked to sit in the kitchen, because it was warmer there.

After the cook went, we had an experienced general, and many afterwards who were not experienced, but much less expensive, when Nellie and Sissie had to do a share of the dusting and sweeping, and I became chambermaid. This I loathed; I was paid only one penny weekly as wages, spent on *The Boy's Own Paper*; I liked reading of adventure and of the things it told you how to make.

We had no lack of books: Mr. Stevenson brought Randolph Caldecott illustrations for us to copy and Grimm, Andersen and Alice to read. All Dickens's, even Thackeray's books we knew off by heart; *Ingoldsby Legends*, too, I pored over, fascinated by their queerness; Edgar Allan Poe was read time after time—I could have recited his "Black Cat!" Grandma taught me to read; her lesson book was the *Arabian Nights*, and we often coaxed her to tell tales of Grandfather starting his career with one lace machine, when he had made money so quickly that Grandma had to hide all the bags of gold in the kitchen boiler if she went out—"No robber ever thought of looking there." One night they caught a thief under their bed with a cobbler's knife sharpened on both edges—she even remembered bull-baiting.

Grandfather, Stephen Bates, did not make an enormous fortune, for his chief interest was in perfecting machinery. He was responsible for many inventions, but the profits always went to someone else, a hitch in the patent or something of that kind. They said he would keep the factory going for a year making one machine, only to be thrown on the scrap-heap at the finish, if he were not satisfied with the result.

Many of the rich people in the town had made their money in the lace trade, and as they grew wealthier they moved into large and still larger houses, where often the ornate furniture was kept merely for show, the owners being more at home in the kitchen. During the youth of the generation preceding mine, Nottingham had been a wild town, the boys having little education and more money than

they knew how to spend. Several of the more astute among the fortune-makers became great names in the land. Some manufacturers left the failing trade of the town and set up business in northern France—Lille, Caudry, St. Quentin. We were closely connected with France; someone was always coming or going.

We were proud of Nottingham Goose Fair and the Market Place in which it was held, both the largest in England. In the Market Place stood the Exchange, a grey-white Georgian building; over it a ball was hoisted every day at one o'clock. Beecroft's toy-shop was underneath—"When we were boys, we bought our toys at Beecroft's. Now we are men we go agen to Beecroft's" was a familiar rhyme. A grand shop it was, with wax dolls as big as myself, which had the brightest blue glass eyes and yellow hair—rows of them in the window. I coveted one intensely, but in vain. Everyone gave their children toys at Goose Fair; at home there was no money to spare.

The following tale was told of how it got its peculiar name—there were no more geese there than at any other fair: a farmer had never allowed his son to see a woman, but one year it was necessary that both should take their cattle to market; on nearing the town they met a girl. "What is that?" asked the son. "A goose," replied his father. Their business done, the farmer wanted to give his son a fairing. "What would you like?" the boy was asked, his answer being, "A goose, Father."

At night the fair was lit with hissing flares; big shadows came and went, for the bare gas flames of the street lamps gave little light—just a fan-shaped flame of yellow, with a little bluish transparency near the burner, like a flower on a stem.

In the daytime during the fair, the sky was thick with smoke and October mist. It always seemed dark, grey and cold, as if winter had already started, but we did not mind—it was so exciting—so many marvels to see, even the shows

outside were wonders—people dancing and “tumbling”—the pictures of the fat woman, in evening dress, too, and we loved to watch the gold figures on the show-fronts beating their drums and triangles, supposedly in time to the band; they never were. Many of the people had faces scarred by the smallpox, a terrifying sight, the thick whitish skin and all the little holes. The lion-tamer at Wombwell’s Menagerie entered the den and put his face into a lion’s mouth; he had scars of another character on both cheeks! Crimson plush, satin, sequins made the show-people’s costumes, the women’s hats were feathered with ostrich plumes, and their skins were brown under the rouge and powder as they showed themselves off outside the booths, while the spieler shouted himself hoarse.

All the countryside made holiday, and put on its best clothes; the women wore bustles and the men billycock hats. There were so many thieves about we had to fasten up our pockets with safety-pins; Grandma had a big linen pocket she tied under her dress; she had to lift her skirt up whenever she wanted her money.

Our top balcony almost overhung the Forest Race-course, where twice yearly meetings took place; from our high perch we looked right down on to the perfect oval of the track, surrounded by short posts and low heavy rails, painted white. All is indelibly printed on my mind, even to the actual section and construction of those railings. I remember every detail of those Spring and Autumn Races: the first jockey to adopt the American seat, introduced by Tod Sloane, and how we laughed—he looked so silly with such short stirrups and knees up, “like a monkey” we said, as mounts and men passed below us to the Starting-post, some of the horses dancing and cavorting and the silks flapping and bellying out behind the men’s backs like balloons; the hooves made a soft thud on the tan-strewn track, all leaf-like flakes of brown, sweet to smell—then came a concerted roar “they’re off,” as at last, for a second the horses got into line, and down dropped the flag. The rough humanity

inside the course changed colour from pink to black as thousands of faces turned to watch the race, every rider jockeying for an inside place. The bunch telescopes—gets smaller and smaller between the converging railings as up the straight side they go. We catch half-sentences—"blue and yellow's first"—"black leads"—no one knows for sure till they round the corner and the whole "field" comes into plain view, when among the yelping of crowd and bookies comes an angrier note, for cerise and white is already pumping his right arm up and down, his whip flail-like against a background of shrubs and distant chimney-pots. The densely packed red-brick grandstand comes to life, and in the slanting balcony outlined against the sky, all is confusion of waving forms, speckled with white flutter of race cards, while in a bellowing crescendo, the crowds swarm across the enclosure's grass to see the finish—just an army of mad mechanical toys, limbs zig-zagging all alike as they run. The Race rounds the last bend—"black's down" we catch—a writhing mass shows and the jockey is flung yards away—"he's all right"—from hands and knees he rises groggily and flicks his soiled breeches. For an instant, through the gathered knot of people, we see the crumpled horse, head in profile turned on gracious curve of neck—one leg stretched. The pounding metre of beating hooves grows louder, distinct even above the hubbub, and as the perspective of the field becomes less acute, down that other straight stretch, we see a riderless horse, stirrups aswing, close behind the leading two, who are running neck and neck in stretch of folding and unfolding spring, their jockeys almost flat. . . . The roar intensifies and scarce a dozen paces from the Finishing-post on our left—the chestnut in super-effort gains a fraction on the grey and by a short head wins in a crash of sound—all thunder rolled in one. . . !

I have seen many races since those days, but have never seen the equal of that excitement or heard anything like the noise, seeming to tear the whole world apart. We children

were then real race-fans and Uncle took the pennies we had saved to back our favourites—chosen for the silks' specially pretty colours. We knew the horses' names and the jockeys' too. Fred Archer was the great man, but I do not remember seeing him.

On the half oval close to us, where the lads of the town played cricket and football in the evenings and on Saturday afternoons, refreshment tents were lined, in array of green, red and white stripes; between each Race men surged in and out and the smell of beer grew stronger, reaching to where we sat. The grass was always worn half bare on that patch, which I crossed in short cut to school, but when the Races were on, we were not allowed to leave the house—too many dangerous characters about, gipsies and sinister-looking people from other parts, thieves and the toughs of the town, "Nottingham Lambs" they were called. All the streets round would be filled with blocks of men crowding to peer through the spiky iron railings, and on the Forest Hill to the right, people hung on the trees like queer fruit.

The waste land across the boulevard, commonly called the "bullyvard" was almost like the Fair; stalls, roundabouts, shows, and sometimes a switchback. At night the glitter was strangely flicked in and out by passing folk, the smoke above reddened by the flares, and cacophonic bands and syrens mingled with the droning buzz—a giant hive of crazy bees.

I could to-day paint these scenes; indeed I intend to do so, memory is so vivid. Doubtless that early association with races, fairs and circuses laid the foundations of much of my later work.

The neighbours looked askance at our unconventional household. They went to church twice every Sunday in their best clothes, and we had no best clothes. Mr. Lee from next door carried the plate round for our pennies, but Uncle went to Parson Greenfield's in a loud checked sports suit,

or sat at home studying the particular subject which happened to interest him at the moment.

Mother took us to church in Hyson Green. Perhaps we had overheard too much talk about religion as it is commonly revealed. The service was to us dreary and the sermon long. I hated going and always tried to make an excuse to stay at home or hide things so that we should be too late to go, and then could walk along the Boulevard to Parson Greenfield's like Uncle.

Our part of the town died every Sunday to the clanking of bells. In the afternoon we were not allowed to draw or play, but we were allowed to look through the old bound volumes of *Punch*; they flew the flag of decorum sufficiently to make them suitable for Sunday perusal. I loved John Leech and Charles Keen's drunken men; Du Maurier's drawings I did not like so well, but I could have passed an examination in any of the jokes.

There were no reproductions of the old masters to be had then; there was little in the Art Gallery at the Castle Museum. The illustrated volumes on our shelves contained only steel engravings of languishing Victorian women or vignetted landscapes—a pine or two, a castle, a lake, a pointing figure in the foreground. A record of the days when craftsmanship was of greater importance than inspiration, when sentimentality effaced truth.

It would be hard for anyone to-day, who for a penny can get reproductions of great works of art on a post-card, to realise the hopelessness of a student set in the middle classes of provincial England at that time. How my mother's ardour for better things came into being and kindled a spark in me is a mystery.

An atmosphere of romance hung about old Nottingham, and there were remnants of great architecture, which were often pulled down, or plastered over with concrete. The early Nottingham alabasters were to be found anywhere but in the place where they came from; those carvings were

exported to most of the churches of Europe in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, but we heard not a whisper of them nor of their beauty.

Often when sinking foundations for a new building, some fresh labyrinth of the prehistoric caves that ran for miles underground would be exposed, and people would go to peer down their length before they were bricked up.

The Castle Rock was a honeycomb of what had been chambers and passages. History tells how a queen used one of these as a trysting-place; just for the payment of two-pence at a turnstile the public could go and see the room where she had been discovered with her lover. As I remember, it consisted of four bare rock walls with squares cut in the living stone for door and window, a mere cave, called Mortimer's Hole.

From the top of the Castle there was a view of the whole town stretching like a map. On the low side lay the meadows; in spring covered with wild crocus, in winter they were flooded by the Trent. It did not need to freeze so very hard to make splendid skating possible here. How cold our fingers would be, picking out a pebble that had jammed in the screw-hole, all prepared in our boot heels; how stiff new straps were; how our cheeks flamed scarlet after an hour or two! Houses are now built over most of those meadows.

One winter when I was five years old there was a heavy fall of snow, followed by a quick thaw, and while the low-lying race-course was still flooded a long and hard frost came—a rink ready made, right at our door. For a month business almost came to a standstill, nearly everyone spent their time on skates—I had my first pair. Harold Knight, a schoolboy, was on the ice somewhere, but I did not know him then.

Nottingham was famed for its pretty girls. Handling lace was supposed to make them dainty. When the mending-shops closed in the Lace Market it was quite the thing to go and stare at the work-girls and pick out the most beautiful as

they tripped down the streets—strangers were always taken to see them.

Both Harold's and my grandfather had been present in the mob when the old Castle had been burnt down during the Chartist Riots. William Knight, but for the big fur collar on his coat would have had his head slashed off by a cut from a sabre. . . . If he had not been wearing that collar I should have never known Harold, for his grandfather was then a young unmarried man.

I never saw the sea till I was nine years old, though I had often tried to paint it. Mr. Cruickshank took Sissie and me with his own children to Ayr in Scotland for six weeks, and we half lived in the water, we even waded the Doon where it runs into the sea; it was a dry summer—Mr. Cruickshank said there might never be so little water running again. We steamed round Ailsa Craig—the captain of the paddle-boat hooted the syren to make all the gulls fly up. We saw Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine. We went to Bobbie Burns's cottage, where Mr. Cruickshank bought presents for us, boxes and various objects in white wood with poetry and pictures printed on them in black. He gave us a seaweed album; on the first page he printed, "Call us not weeds, we are flowers of the sea"; overleaf I painted a picture of Greenan Castle.

Only once were we respectably dressed, on a Sunday when we went to church, where three of the children were sick-- "Too much Gideon," Mr. Cruickshank said was the reason, but the real cause was having to watch the preacher's white beard wagging up and down during his age-long sermon.

Mother was distressed on our return; she said our feet had spread through going so long bare foot. My two white mice had been eaten by a cat the very night we had gone away.

Sometimes for a summer holiday Mother took us to Rowsley in Derbyshire, where we stayed on a farm and she paid a few shillings weekly for all of us—we ate chiefly bread and cheese and drank milk. Every night before going to bed the farmer's wife used to fetch a gallipot

out of the cupboard by the open fireplace in the kitchen, and rub her Derbyshire neck with goosegrease. Every day we packed up our dinner and, carrying our large can of milk, we walked along the white dusty road to Haddon Hall, where we sketched all day.

We always saved crumbs and watched the rats and mice come out together; we had been told they never did that, but there they were—on the hearthstone in Dorothy Vernon's bedchamber, which Mother used as a studio. She had a pass-key. We scratched our names on the leaded pane in that room with her diamond ring. We knew every inch of the buildings—we were really Derbyshire.

Another summer Mother and I went together up Lathkildale. We stayed at a farm above the valley, where we went every day; Mother was painting the mill and the thickly wooded slopes—all curly green trees. I learned then how to make a flat stone bounce across the mill-pond—a fascinating game which spoilt the reflections Mother was trying to paint. Farther up the valley, a mile away, was a bend and when Mother asked the miller what was up there, he replied, "I have never been so far"—he had been there all his life, he said. He thought it such a pity that Mother should not leave her big picture hanging on the trees "to show what a pretty view it is."

Mother could not always afford a proper holiday for us; sometimes she took us, laden with paints and lunch, to picnic at Wilford, by the Trent. We walked there and back because she could not pay the tram fares. Mother painted a picture of "Kirk White's Cottage," I sketched the old church, and we pretended that the patch of shingle by the river was a beach and the water the sea.

At home I remember Mother waking us early to see the sun rising over the race-course on the forest, which had once been a portion of Sherwood Forest, of Robin Hood fame. One night she took me out of bed, wrapped in blankets, to watch from our top window a factory on fire on the waste land across the Boulevard. The machinery

crashed through as each floor caught alight, till nothing but a shell was left, with flames coming out of the top and showing through all the windows. We could see all the leaves on the trees as plain as day.

Other scenes remain vivid: my sisters doing their lessons at the dining-room table, by the light of five gas-jets set in round opal-white glass globes on the arms of the brass chandelier which had cost fifty pounds; at the other end of the table Mother cutting out and stitching clothes for us on the sewing-machine that sounded more like a threshing-machine; Grandma by the fire knitting a red cap for my doll; Little Grandma in the big armchair on the other side, staring at nothing with her black eyes all screwed up at the corners, groaning and muttering now and again, till roused by Uncle's entrance, when she would with difficulty get up, saying, "I've got your cheer, Arthur," and she had to be forcibly put back; Uncle having his after-dinner nap on the long horsehair sofa (Grandfather Bates had lain down to be measured for it when he and Grandma set up house). As Uncle Arthur lay there, a newspaper was put over him to keep off the flies. The gold factor's hand that a friend had given him hung down straight from the heavy gold links of his watch-chain, the line of which curved richly across his black business waistcoat. He was a portly man, a bit of a bon-vivant and a great favourite.

I remember thinking what a jolly man Uncle was one day when he came home with a parcel of black puddings and insisted that the table should instantly be laid. He and I sat down and ate them in solitary enjoyment. I did not know anything was wrong, until afterwards, when Uncle was put to bed to "sleep it off."

My memory retains a picture of Little Grandma coming downstairs one morning, her red-mittened hands on the banisters, Grandma standing at the foot of the stairs with a letter in her hand telling the old lady that her daughter Ann was dead. "Well, she lived to a good old age," was the snappy reply.

There were wet days spent in the stuffy attic playing with the lumber of past generations, and trying on the uniform Uncle had worn as a youth when he was sergeant of the buglers of the "Robin Hood" Volunteers. Our Grandfather Johnson's school-books were there in a cowhide-covered trunk—I have his arithmetic book now, a model of calligraphy, and on the first page is a rose from a Valentine, its colour still gaudy as when first stuck there. One enormous wooden chest bound with iron was filled with packets of Valenciennes lace, held together with narrow bright blue paper bands—so suspicious-looking a box, as I remember, it is hard to imagine why Grandma was never caught when she used it for smuggling lace into France to help Aunt and Uncle West start their business in St. Quentin. As babies we were wrapped in the striped silk Indian shawl that Grandma had bought from another smuggler for ten pounds, the brilliant colours of which only enhanced Nellie's own brilliance, when we were all older and she wore it over her white frilled muslin frock as a cloak for party-going; at one of these she and Harold Knight, then a boy, became sweethearts for the evening.

Something about that attic, all those books and things that dead people had used made you feel queer: when it was dark creatures lived in the big hot water cisterns and you never knew who was going to step out of that little door—it was awful passing it at the head of the stairs when fetching something for Mother, and then striking a match and stretching to reach a gas-bracket. One windy night it blew open—a hot breath poured over me—the knob caught in my pocket—I was held and didn't know by what—everyone rushed up—they thought I was being murdered. Side by side with reality, I led another life with two brothers whom all the others envied; we used to play, run and walk the streets; I'll draw us: two boys and a girl between dressed in a real silk frock, a smocked frock, red on white, but boys are so hard to draw—much harder than girls—they're so much uglier. Why must girls be pretty? Mother's

mirror frames me ovally, a pink and white round with a bush of yellow hair—everyone says my eyes are so blue, but I wish I had dark eyes and hair like Maisie—all the boys call her out for Postman's Knock at parties. She says her Mother does those shiny ringlets on a stick, not like mine that go into four rag twists every night—knobbly to sleep on—four stiff sausages in the daytime. Mother says it's the only way to keep me looking decent, my hair will stand on end and the children call after me in the street—it looks so silly. Grandma's always washing out our hair rags which she makes out of old sheets—says we must learn to do it ourselves—I can't even learn how to put mine in, they always go wrong. Grandma says "Cleanliness is next to Godliness" and takes us to the bathroom basin and washes all our heads and screws them up in towels—oh, so tight! The kitchen fire is made up and round the big stove we all three sit bent over, shaking out the drips which sizzle on the hot iron—we must not do that—it makes spots of rust. There is a smell of hot soap and towels, and the odour from the roasting coffee machine, sent by Aunt West from France, put at the boiler side to cool. It's sickening to have to rub so long, but Grandma says we'll get earache if we don't—I hate combing mine out, it's always so full of *lugs*—it's fun though when it's done, just like twisted wire and so strong—if I pull it up, it stands bolt upright and stays there—then I'll pretend I'm a lunatic and do antics and pull faces till Nell and Sis are frightened—the cook says "You'll get set like that," and Mother comes in to say "Stop that mad excitement Laura—why will you get in such a state? You'll never sleep to-night and your Grandma's a bit upset." Uncle Stephen came this afternoon, Grandma's heart's always a bit queer after he has been, because he smells of beer. "He never comes to see his Mother, except when half tight," she says. There's always such a lot of talk of money if he or Uncle George come and we are sent out of the room. "They never come except when they want something," Grandma knows. Uncle Arthur says that

Uncle Stephen is too familiar with the Factory hands and goes out drinking with them and how can he, the youngest, have authority when Stephen the eldest son who has all the say goes on like that—"It's no use going on with the Factory—the sooner it fails the better—I'm sick of it—if I had it to myself I'd make a go of it!" Stephen was a lovely boy his Mother tells, "but he came when we were getting rich and I with all the other children coming and having to help my husband with the Factory girls, he had his own way too much—we kept him at school too long, he was there till nineteen, but he never learnt anything." Old Aunt Patience came yesterday, when she comes she comes to sit from two o'clock to half-past nine and oh my doesn't she enjoy her tea and supper! "Look at her poor old leather lips working," exclaims Grandma, "Poor old Pay!" We all burst out laughing and when she sees us she wants to know what we're laughing at, because she's nearly stone deaf and never heard what Grandma said. I wish I'd not been so small when Uncle Tom died who kept the Ram Hotel on the Long Row, Nell and Sis say he was not like Uncle Stephen and Uncle George, but more like Uncle Arthur and he always brought them goodies. . . .

It's Saturday and Nell and Sis have gone out, they might have let me go too—said I was only a kid. It's so quiet in the house, Grandma's lying down, Little Grandma kept her up all last night, she'll let no one touch her but Grandma and never remembers Grandma's old as well—it's funny how people live so long—is every afternoon as long as this? I've been stretching out of this window for hours and Mother's clock says it's only a minute—will the Smiths send for me to come and play? I can just see their green gate that leads to their jolly garden at the bottom of Mount Hooton, if I lean a long way out—I see the handle turn—the gate opens—so slowly, they're coming for me! No, it's only Mr. Smith going out for his walk. . . . The clock hands crawl like dying snails—it must be past all chance now—they'll never come—and the clock says only five

minutes have really gone. Will all afternoons be as long as this and shall I live to be as old as Little Grandma—just sit and sit or hobble on a stick—does every afternoon seem as long to her? Perhaps not, she never thinks now, except about the sugar she steals to suck—her pockets are always full, Grandma says the tea things must be left by her for a long time so that she has the chance of taking the lumps—she thinks no one knows. She'll never eat an orange till it's green, there's always three or four on a shelf above her head "getting ripe to eat" she tells us. She used to like a drop of gin at night, and once the gin and the water carafe were just the same and Grandma kept filling her glass up with gin instead of water—they had to carry her to bed. She had a stroke when ninety and fell downstairs and broke her arm—"It mended as well as if she'd only been twenty." There's five generations in our family, Mother's eldest sister's daughter had a boy, Reggie is his name—he's a *mardy* boy! We were all photographed together a little while ago and Little Grandma wore her best lace shawl—in the photograph you'd never think she's ninety-five—she looks so like Sis, though Sis is fairer than anyone ever was before and Little Grandma is so black. "It's bad of Nellie" they say, "she's like a colt, all arms and legs sticking out at angles." It's good of me, I'm wearing my black velveteen frock with the Irish crochet pointed cuffs and collar—if it were only not so old! But it doesn't show in the photograph that the pile is off both elbows and down the front; the other day when coming home from school with Norah Truman who lives on the Forest Road, it came on to rain and I said "It'll spoil my velvet dress" and Norah said "I should think it'd do it good." That was just as we were passing the Boys' High School gates; sometimes if they were left open and no one there we used to go in and swing on their horizontal bars in the open shed just inside. I wish the boys left school at the same time we do, it would be such fun—they have to be in earlier too, whenever I'm going to School I see one of the Masters who is always late racing in

with a bright red face, we call him the *Scarlet Runner* and laugh behind his back—it's so funny to see a Master late every morning—I don't suppose he knows we see him running like a kid who is going to be whipped and how we make game of him. He's such a clumsy runner too—I could beat him at that. Mary Stuart and I are the best runners in the School, neither can beat the other, but I can beat her at playing flags, all the girls want me on their side—I don't know why it's such a funny feeling I get sometimes—it won't come every day, but when it does I can turn and twist through any crowd no matter how they try to catch me—it's as if I say "They shan't touch me" and they can't, no matter how close I am. I've got that feeling—it's so grand—I don't care how much they laugh at my old clothes and ask why I have no new party frock, when all the others have a new one every year and I am wearing Nellie's, six years old. Then too, they are glad enough to get me to help draw their maps, what duffers they are at it! Sometimes when I draw I feel like when I'm dodging in a crowd, and some performances last Christmas, when I was playing the Ugly Duchess in *Alice in Wonderland* I'd feel the same, and then I raged and tore about the stage in front of the scene that I'd helped Mother to paint, while everyone clapped to see me go so mad and I loved it, nor did it matter that someone else was playing Alice, she couldn't act a bit, she never felt like that. . . . Mother couldn't afford to buy me a new frock just for a school play, but she made a brown paper pointed head-dress and painted it with gold, and I wore the same old velveteen frock that did duty every day and to make it long enough with a train, Mother made a deep border for the skirt and big cuffs of cotton wadding and speckled it with black—everyone said they thought it real ermine from the front. . . .

I remember Sissie's hair shining so brightly golden that it looked false; Nellie in her first long dress with a tight-fitting bodice like Mother's, but one of my recollections is

more vivid than anything else: when, at the age of nine or ten, I saw the undertakers lift my great-grandma off her bed and put her into her coffin.

I was supposed to be the only creature Little Grandma had ever loved or spoken to kindly. Towards the end of her life she often mistook one of my sisters for me, and would say, "Come here, darling," and when they replied timidly, "It's not Laura!" "Get away with you," Little Grandma would snap.

She had been a corset-maker as a girl. We were told that she once went to measure young Queen Charlotte for a pair of stays, and Her Majesty was nowhere to be found, but was eventually discovered dancing on a dung-heap.

Little Grandma and her husband had never agreed except to have a large family and be separated. When he died she journeyed right across England to slap his face as a last tribute; however, she arrived too late—the coffin lid had been fastened down.

She loved me to comb her grey-black hair, which reached down to her waist, and used to say, "Lay on harder with the comb; it makes the hair grow and I like the scratching."

I offered to go to her room when the undertakers came. I was allowed to go alone. It was not considered unfitting that I, a child, should with morbid curiosity watch such a scene, as clear now as if seen an hour ago—a hair-raising impression: the winter light filtered coldly through the lace curtains at the big sash-window, which overlooked the back-yard and a wall covered with ivy, grown from a sprig we children planted. The coffin propped on chairs close to the bed smelt of varnish, was made of yellow oak, and had brass handles. The undertaker's beery-looking men, all dressed in black, took off the pennies that had been keeping the eyelids down, but a slit showed unclosed, and as they lifted her there was no querulous protest. . . . Her features were exaggeratedly aquiline and her skin looked grey-brown against the snowy wadding and paper lace. The frilled

French night-cap strings were drawn tight and tied, but did not prevent the mouth from gaping slightly—it looked dark inside. . . !

The lid was screwed on; she was ready to be “planted,” as Uncle said. On the name-plate was engraved: “Charlotte Thir, died in her 97th year.”

She was buried in the General Cemetery, and after the funeral, we found Mr. Cruickshank waiting outside to take us for a walk in the forest—he said he had been behind a tombstone all the time and we wondered which one could have hidden him—he was so big. We went right round the race-course track and when we got home all traces of death had been cleared away. It was nearly six o'clock when we had tea, with fried sausages and a shilling's-worth of coconut cakes which John Cruickshank always called “hard-uns.”

CHAPTER II

ST. QUENTIN

WHEN I was twelve years old my Great-Uncle and Aunt West-Thir offered to send me to school in the town where they were living in France. It was planned that, after I could speak French, I should be sent to one of the big ateliers in Paris.

Both Uncle and Aunt were anxious to do something for Mother's children; they were very fond of her. It fell to my lot to be the chosen one, perhaps because Nellie and Sissie were already studying for the teaching profession. Poor Nellie cried when it was decided I should be the one to go; she felt it should have been she, the eldest—hers was such cruel hard work, to be at the Board School every morning before nine, to teach dirty children all day, to study at the University and do homework till late at night; often the mahogany white-faced clock struck twelve before Nellie and Sissie had finished. This clock, like the horse-hair sofa, was one of our grandparents' first purchases; it had cost ten pounds.

An epidemic of influenza swept over England like a plague, which had started in France and was called the "Grippe." The Crown Prince had died of it, and when Nellie fell ill Mother was sure it was the grippe, but the doctor blamed the family for having moved to No. 35. He said that our new house, set at the bottom of the hill, received the drainage from all the land around.

Mother was busy and worried nursing Nellie, so I cut my own clothes and stitched them with the help of a woman, packed my own few things, and early one morning, sick with excitement, I went up to my eldest sister's room to bid her good-bye. A night-light burned in a saucer at her side; by



STELLA
(*Aquatint*)
1932



LADY WITH SHAWL

(Aquatint)

1927

its feeble light I saw her flushed face framed in the mane of her hair. When she saw me ready she burst into tears. "I shall never see you again, Laura," she said. I stood there dry-eyed, thinking her stupid to make such a fuss. The doctor had assured us that she was not dangerously ill—Mother had asked whether we should go; he had laughed and said, "Her illness is not serious; of course they must go."

Grandma was taking me to St. Quentin. She often went over to see her sister, who in return often came to stay with us in Nottingham. We children were always greatly excited when she came. Such a lot of strange foreign objects came out of her shiny black-covered basket-trunk with its layers of trays, in which there was always something specially French for each of us. Once she brought over a big model of a theatre, together with many changes of scenery. I loved to perch on her lap there was so little of that I had to hang on by her neck, and she used an aromatic perfume, delicious to smell.

Of the journey with Grandma through England to Dover I remember only the miles of roofs, nearly hidden by crooked chimney-pots, as we neared London. Calais seemed a completely different world. Grandma thought I should be able to help her with the French I had learned at school; she knew only a few words, but I could understand nothing of what was said by the porters, who talked so fast.

We had to get out of our train at Lille, which we reached during the afternoon, and Grandma found a handsome woman in the station buffet who could speak English; she was kind and helpful, although a stranger. Grandma, having little money to spare, was horrified when this woman told her there were no trains going to St. Quentin till the following morning. "It's all right," the creature assured her, "I will let you have a very cheap room in my house." Grandma and I sat down at a table; we had only just dipped our thick, pointed spoons in our *bouillon*, when a train came in and a porter calling to us burst into the buffet; we did not understand what he said, but his gesticulations made matters plain

—there was a fight for our luggage between the porter and our lady friend, who had no good reason for wishing to keep us, but fortunately for us the porter won and we were bundled into the train for St. Quentin just as it began to move. I was sorry to leave our new acquaintance so roughly; she was fascinating.

Great-Aunt and Uncle West had an L-shaped lace factory; at one end was their house, a portion cut off the main structure, the whole surrounded by big gardens. The building was only two stories high with a long attic above, formed by the peak of the roof, which was just high enough to hold the apparatus for dressing the lace, an operation which happened weekly under Aunt's superintendence, when the air around was filled with the smell of hot glue. The grinding noise of the engine-pistons made our lullaby and on fête days and rare Sundays when it stopped we hated the quiet and could not sleep.

The outside walls of the factory were whitewashed and almost covered with vines; underneath the leaves were countless bunches of small green grapes; along the top of the walls "West-Thir Fabrique de Tulle et de Dentelles" was announced in black lettering, so different from the lace factories in Nottingham, built of red brick and surrounded with dirty yards. Our two gardens here were full of fruit trees and flowers in bloom, and there were tomatoes shaped like plums, sweet tasting, warmed by the blazing sun—I could eat as many as I liked. The mosquitoes had hatched out, so in the evenings we could not sit in the arbours, which were romantic, for the high wall round the gardens almost hid the mean district in which the manufactory was set. Through the tops of the trees two gasometers could be seen, the other end was bordered by the canal, along which painted barges were drawn by horses; beyond that stretched the fields, the scene of a battle during the Franco-Prussian war in 1870. Aunt West had gone out there when it was over to tend the wounded and the dying, and for years I kept as

souvenir a Zouave's belt that she had picked up, made of three strips of leather stitched together—lemon, white, lemon, with a big brass buckle.

During the fight a cannon-ball had carried away a corner of the factory, in spite of the Union Jack that flew above. Prussian soldiers were quartered in Aunt West's house for months—she had a young French soldier hiding in the factory all the time! "Poor thing, he was only sixteen, much too young to fight—he came to me crying," she told us.

A few years ago I saw a photograph of all that remained of those works and gardens after the Great War—just a rubble-heap lying in absolute desolation; not a brick left in its place. The flag is still in existence, and decorated the front of my sister's house during the 1935 Jubilee Celebrations.

As I knew the house, one walked straight into the living-room from one of the gardens, and a cherry tree bearing black, luscious fruit shaded the doorway. The floor of the room was tiled in black and white. Quite early in the morning the Venetian shutters drawn to keep out the sun tinged the interior with green, as under water. Ornate high-backed chairs were ranged round the walls; inside the buffet was a cigar-holder that played tunes when you turned it to take a cigar and on the mantelshelf a clock held up by two gold figures; a stiff bouquet made of flowers cut off short and stuck in sand stood on the buffet shelf, like a target, rosebud centre, perfect rings all round.

All was scrupulously neat and severe, not at all like home, except at meals when Aunt and Uncle came in from the works. I enjoyed the French food and the cherry brandy made from the cherries outside, big jars of which stood maturing in the cupboards. Aunt was convinced that it was good for me to have a spoonful or two of rum in my tea, but although after a while I got used to it and enjoyed the taste, I thirsted for water—forbidden on account of typhoid infection.

At five o'clock in the morning Marie, the *bonne*, came to

wake us with a cup of black coffee and a thickly buttered cut from a new ring of bread fresh from the *boulangier*; many of them encircled his left arm and went right up the stick held in his hand, as he went from door to door. In token for each ring sold he flung a wooden tally over his shoulder; his method of keeping accounts.

Marie, our *bonne*, was monstrously fat; she knew only a word or two of French, which she pronounced with a Nottingham accent, and with those few words and her own dialect, she could make everyone understand—no one understood me, although I had learnt French at school. Marie came in the mornings carrying an enormous green umbrella, whatever the weather. "Did you notice the bulge in it when she went home to-night?" Aunt West would ask us. Marie wore no corsets under her grey woollen blouse; when it was hot she took even that off and worked in her white linen chemise and skirt only, when her blue apron-strings made a deep crease in her middle, and to sit on her lap was like being on a feather-bed that heaved up and down in an annoying way when she laughed. Her smiling mouth was a toothless gap in her great face, surrounded by the gofferred frill of her muslin cap, the strings of which were tied in a bow under her many chins.

Charles, the odd job man, ruled all by his charm. His black eyes had long lashes, his skin was brown and smooth, his hair curly. In his blue blouse and peaked cap I thought him beautiful—even when he turned out to be a thief my admiration of him was not lessened—the place was not the same after he left. I drew these two in my sketch-book and years afterwards Mr. Riley of Loughborough bought this book for a penny. He found it on the cobbles in Nottingham Market.

To guard the bureau side of the factory a dog was loosed in the garden at night. In the daytime he was chained. "No one can go near him except the man who feeds him," I was warned, but he became quite tame with me. One day while teasing him with the big coloured ball I had brought

from England, he got hold of it and burst it. The *mécanicien* who had a shop close by promised to mend the ball, and when next day I went for it, he pointed to the bench where it lay—I tried to lift it up—he roared with laughter—it was filled with lead. “*Voilà, c’est bien racommodé,*” he exclaimed. I did not consider it well mended at all and could not imagine why he laughed.

“I can never keep a cat,” Aunt West used to say. “If I get one, they have a good soup of fricasse for dinner at one of the cottages within a week.” One day I saw the gardener stoop down, pick up a snail from the path and eat it raw. Aunt had bought some *escargots* for supper, but instead of eating them, she had let them go in the garden, where they had multiplied.

The factory reeked with the smell of garlic, the hands brought slabs of a dark bread, rubbed the crust well with a section of the root and ate it voraciously for their dinners, all washed down with a litre of small beer bought at an *estaminet* by the canal. I was often sent to fetch a jug-full for ourselves, when I just went to the palings and yelled “Madame”—an arm would come through a gap and take the jug which came back filled after a few minutes. I never saw more of “Madame” than her arm, nor knew what the rest of her was like.

New impressions were crowding into my life, but I missed all our books at home—there seemed to be nothing to do—I felt lonely and longed for other children to play with, and no letter had come from Mother to say how Nellie was, but Aunt comforted us with “No news is good news.”

One morning Uncle West came round to the house with a telegram that said, “Nellie worse; may not live.” The sun and the flowers in the garden suddenly looked garish and horrid—the factory went on just the same, men whistled and rushed along the paths, talking and laughing just as if it did not matter—“she must get better,” I thought. “I’m as strong as a horse, nothing ever hurts me,” she was always saying. “People like Little Grandma die, but not Nellie!

She's not properly grown-up yet and is going to be 'sweet seventeen' in four months." Grandma and I hugged each other and cried.

I could see Nell in her brown cashmere with the black and gold braid trimming. I remembered Mother saying, "Nellie's turning into a woman." I remembered looking up at her one night as we were sitting doing our lessons at the dining-room table, and noticing how her nose and lips were modelled in little flats and exclaiming, "Nellie's features look as if they had been cut out with a chisel!" Mother said her hair was just like Nellie's when she was a girl, thick and frizzy, and red and brown and gold—I wondered, if she died, what they would do with the crimson bow she wore in her hair—I loved that crimson bow. I remembered how angry she was when that boy kissed her. I remembered how annoyed I had been when she cried and said, "I shan't ever see you again," and I thought she was jealous because I was going to France.

Grandma took so long to open the black-edged envelope which came the next day. She had to get her spectacles before she could read Mother's fine handwriting; Mother always wrote across when she had a lot to say—Nellie had been dead even before the telegram was sent. . . .

I remember little of the next days, when everything was awful and black. I could not believe it was really true—Mother would write again and say it was not true. "I shan't ever see you again," Nellie had said, and I had taken no notice and had gone away just the same. It was too terrible a memory. Poor Nell!

It was dreadfully hot. No one could bear to go in the garden, and the house was like an oven, so I found haven in the vault-like ice-cold shed, a cut through the buildings, where the dyeing was done in enormous vats filled with black liquid, deep enough to drown in. Brooding, I lay on the slatted trollies on which they wheeled the wet lace—with a bundle of undyed tulle for a cushion.

Uncle West went on the drink for two days, as he always

did when upset. We sat one evening in an arbour at the end of the garden, despite the mosquitoes; Uncle West was behaving like an idiot while Aunt West dropped coins into the bottom of a bowl of water in which lay brass handles attached to an electric shock box—Aunt thought it might bring him to his senses. Uncle wanted the money for more drink and he looked such a silly frownsed old man, dipping his hand into the water and screaming, but Aunt was not going to let him get the coins—she was making the current much too strong for him to keep his fingers in the water.

Grandma would not stay long at St. Quentin. Aunt West decided to go back with her.

I was put in charge of Marie Légère, the lace-mending overseer, who like all the other work-women, never wore a hat; in winter a woollen muffler was wrapped round her head, framing her face with little black bobbles. Her mousy hair was always smooth and shiny, arranged high on top with a twist at the back, and even her working clothes possessed a certain *chic*. One of the most important things in life, I learnt, was to be considered *chic*.

Uncle West remained behind to look after the business while Aunt was away. The book-keeper in the Bureau, named Gobeau, taught me the French coinage by letting me pay the wages every Saturday; it was fun to hand money to the *ouvriers*.

Uncle West was usually a lovable, gentle creature, but he gave way to intermittent bouts of drink; at such times he turned into a raving maniac. "You can do nothing with him till he makes himself too ill to drink any more," Aunt used to say.

The train bearing Grandma and Aunt West away had scarcely left the station when Uncle West fell a prey to his cravings. . . . During these fits it was his custom to hire an open cab, discard the cardigan he always wore in the works, and, his arms folded, shirt-sleeves rolled up, he would loll back alone on the seat, a thin man with greying hair and moustache, looking immensely dignified as he lay against the

cushions, his straw hat tilted well forward on his head, as he toured the countryside, stopping at every *estaminet* till he was brought home to be put to bed.

After a sleep, Uncle would prepare to start again. Immediately on rising he put on his hat, and through the door of the room where Marie Légère slept with me, we would hear him thumping himself on the chest, shouting, "Jack you are a man!" over and over again. Marie and I knew he was standing before the mirror admiring himself, for Aunt West had told us this is what he did. All petty worries fell from him; he was convinced of his greatness and good looks; it was then he knew that he was the superior of his wife and that he would be the boss in future. . . !

Aunt West did not stay away long; she was afraid, in spite of her husband's promises. Marie Légère and I set off one late afternoon to meet her at the station. I was carrying the formal bouquet etiquette decreed should be presented to a traveller. For this nosegay, I had chosen pink rose-buds and purple pansies, and Marie showed me how to cut the paper holder and the frill and gimpy it all round.

On our way to the station a man followed us—frightened, we ran—he ran too, and caught Marie. I was in a frenzy of fear when I saw him get hold of her and try to drag her up an alleyway, so I kicked and knocked on every door in turn, screaming for help. Crowds rushed out—she was soon rescued. Until then I had not understood why I was forbidden to go outside our big gates unattended, for no girl was safe alone in the streets—rape and murder went on all round; some of the men were like savages. No respectable citizen dared be in the streets when the cafés closed at night because their throats might be cut for the sake of a franc or two. To be so guarded was horrible after the freedom of England, where I could run anywhere with little fear, but here, in provincial France, no girl, even with a guardian, and though a mere child, could walk the biggest of the thoroughfares without attracting offensive attention.

The people I knew were charming, and intensely

interested in everything I drew or painted. It seemed that even to the meanest Frenchman an artistic talent was something to be revered. In many ways I loved France—our second home.

There was dissatisfaction and rumours of a strike in the works. Aunt said, "I'll show them," and sent for the loaded revolver that always lay on a table by her bedside. The target was fixed in the garden where everyone could see her—she was a good shot. I remember watching her and the faces of the men at the windows as they turned away from their lace-machines which went up and down behind.

Aunt was a terrifying figure: not only did she roll her dark eyes in a fierce way, but she had a heavy down on her upper lip like a young man's moustache, and her eyebrows made a thick black line; her hair was a greying blue-black. In her tight-fitting French clothes she looked more typically French than any Frenchwoman, for during the years she had lived there she had acquired many of their characteristics: her interest in clothes, her business ability, her power over men, her gaiety in company, her deep depressions, her quick temper, her belief in no one. I had never told a lie at home, but found myself doing so to her just because she expected me to. She did not know the meaning of the word fear; I saw Uncle West mad-drunk, standing over her one night, with a carving knife in his hand; "I'll kill you if you don't give me some money," he screamed. Aunt did not move as she sat, except to close her hand over the keys lying on the table. She had just brought back the bunch—a formidable weapon—after locking up the works. "Come on!" she said. . . .

Sometimes there were big sums of money in a drawer in Uncle's and Aunt's bedroom, and besides ourselves no one in the big place, except the engine-driver. A door opened straight out of their room into the shop where all the clipping frames were—they were always afraid of that door, that was why the pistol was there ready loaded—anyone had only to

force the lock and put their hand through to pull it open. My friend Charles was caught in the daytime with his hand in it; he had been pilfering a few francs at a time over a long period, but Aunt had suspected everyone but him—evidently that was where the ring went that Aunt had given to me. When it was missed, I had my first shock at not being believed, she was sure I had taken it out and lost it and would not confess—I loathed all reference to that ring. . . . Aunt was constantly saying the chest of drawers must be moved away from that ominous door, but it was still there when I visited St. Quentin many years later after both Uncle and Aunt were dead and lying in their big vault in the cemetery.

Two months or so passed and school-term was about to begin, when as a complete surprise, a present came from Uncle West: a magnificent oil paint-box, a real Parisian artist's box made of handsome wood, the best that could be bought; inside was every paint and brush I could wish for. My joy in it was perhaps the greatest I had ever had—it was even a much better one than Mother's, hers was only made of tin. I used that box and palette for many, many years, till it warped and fell to pieces through being used out of doors in all weathers.

Early in September I went to school, a week or two before the term commenced, *chez* Mademoiselle Mollard, Rue du Gouvernement. Aunt West arranged that I should spend two whole mornings every week at the studio of a painter called Lucien Schmidt, who was then at work on some lunettes designed for the crypt of the *Cathédrale*, generally called the *Basilique*. I posed with my hair undone from its plait for a figure in one of these; I think I represented Mary Magdalene. A black French dress that Aunt had made for me enraged Monsieur Schmidt; he used to tweak the sleeves that stuck up so fashionably high, saying, "*C'est laid!*"

All my clothes were a cause of trouble, for when I had to

go into black for Nellie, Aunt made the dressmaker copy my coloured English dresses, and a sailor-suit translated by a Frenchwoman became not only a comedy suit but a suit of mourning indeed; it appealed to the French girls' sense of humour. In the long dormitory at school my hats were fetched out of my cupboard and used as footballs which I had to pick up to wear afterwards, while the girls bent themselves double with laughter.

I had not led an altogether blameless life: when I first went to school it was still holidays and only one other girl was there, whose name was Ethel; we were both in the charge of a tall, pale mistress whose prominent eyes were watery, red-rimmed and frightened. The preacher at the Protestant church was a young, handsome man—whether he was the reason for that young woman's anxiety to attend service that first Sunday I do not know, but *malheureusement* her desire was thwarted, for I took advantage of the option we had of going or not, an option given on account of the Roman Catholics who attended the school. I was thoroughly obstinate in my refusal—I could not be left alone, so I created my first bad impression that day.

One night I beat the lonely mistress with the back of my hair-brush right on her behind as she was saying her prayers. I thought I might be struck dead directly I had done so, but without a word she threw herself on her bed while I went on with the torment, afraid—thinking it a good game. Suddenly I found she was crying; then I was sorry. But the worst mischief was done when I stripped down to the waist to wash in the big English basin Aunt had provided. It was shocking! “I had no modesty!” I was forbidden to do it again. All the other girls dressed under the tent of their night-gowns, did their hair, and then wiped their faces with the corner of a wet towel; after they had washed their hands they were ready to go downstairs. And I was used to a cold plunge every morning.

A pair of motherless twins only four years old arrived. They stayed three months. I remember peeping through

the door into their room one evening. Their young father was crying as he sat by their bed. One child lay half stripped on his knee; I saw the sores on its body and we knew both twins' little heads were covered with lice.

Ethel and I became great friends, and this did not help me to learn the language quickly—I was always at the bottom of the class, it was difficult to follow the lessons in French; so much time had to be spent drawing and I simply hated being a duffer. Ethel could speak like any French girl—she had been there years. There was a bond between us: her mother was dead and I had lost Nellie. Ethel taught me a great deal; in spite of being so long in what we thought that awful place, she had kept her Irish honesty—she scorned the deceit that was expected of us and she laughed me out of saying “gras” for “graass” and “glas” for glaass.” Every week she wrote to her Aunt; the letter was treated with respect by the head mistress, because it was addressed to the Countess So-and-so—we used to mock the way she handled the envelope. From time to time Ethel received a postal order for five shillings; changed into French money, this brought in six francs or more. We then had a chocolate feast, and Ethel shared the basket of pastries Aunt West sent. The food had to be eaten up quickly as the cupboard in which we kept it was infested with ants.

The old bad-tempered cook, a little withered dark old woman sold the chocolate. She used to mix the salads in a big bowl—dipping her bare hands and arms right in to turn the leaves. We drank real English tea on Sundays when the cook tied the tea-leaves up in a bag and boiled them. The bag was boiled and re-boiled for a week till a fresh bag was made. Only on Sundays the girls had the privilege of indulging in this drink, for which privilege we were not specially grateful, so were not sorry that all other afternoons we drank water, typhoid or no typhoid.

In Monsieur Schmidt's studio I painted “still lifes” and copied his pictures; for homework he gave me prints cut out of *Le Petit Journal* to copy. I had to bring portraits of

generals and notabilities to every lesson for him to criticise; I loathed doing them. Mother had not wished me to copy, but to draw from the life. However, I got used to doing what was wanted with mechanical accuracy.

On my own account I drew all the girls at school, executing commission portraits of them for four sous each. With the money I bought chocolates to eat with the dry, blackish, poor-tasting bread, with which we filled our stomachs till they were swollen. Bread never fully satisfied the hunger that raged inside us—the other food was poor and scanty and Ethel and I were a little snobbish about the horse-meat at dinner; no matter how hungry, we always smuggled the slabs of meat into envelopes and threw them over the garden wall, into the grounds of the *Cathédrale*.

When all the other girls went for their daily walk I had to stay in the classroom drawing for Monsieur Schmidt. "I can't afford to pay all that money for painting lessons, if you don't work," Aunt had told me. She gave with one hand and took away with the other. Uncle West gave me a handsome supply of pocket-money the first term, but because Aunt thought I had been extravagant with it I had no more. Nearly all the money had gone in buying pinafores which I had been obliged to get, but trying to make her understand was like beating your head against a brick wall.

I missed the gymnasium we had in the school in England, the races we ran and the wild games we played. I tried without success to teach the French girls to catch a ball; as for running, a girl did not run, and they would not try, but just giggled and went back to their walking in whispering pairs. I was the butt of the school—a blonde stranger—even Ethel knew how to behave like a French girl and wore decent clothes, not things that caused everyone to scream with laughter.

I grew utterly miserable, languid, all pulled together inside, terribly lonely and homesick; public opinion was too strong for even Ethel to remain my constant champion. . . . The teachers too were infected with the general feeling

against me. "You are stupid," they exclaimed. "We must put you into the babies' class." I was always behind the others because there was no opportunity for "preparation"; during the hours set aside for it, more generals and politicians had to be copied.

Even the head mistress bore me a grudge. I could not keep clean without continual washing. I could not pile the clothes in my linen-cupboard to look like a heap of unopened newspapers as all the other girls did. Mademoiselle Mollard was always mistaking me for "Pline," who was a harmless idiot. "Pline! Pline!" she would call out in sheer spite when she saw me in the distance, pretending she did not know it was I. Pline, a mere *crétin*, was a monstrosity and had fair hair too—to mistake me for her was doubtless just a petty insult, deliberately planned, and the effect on me was devastating. . . . But I revenged myself by caricaturing the head mistress's own repulsive looks, and in doing horrible drawings of her which I tore into minute pieces. How I detested her when she came to stand on a chair next to mine once a week to wind up the clock! Her face drooped down on one side, her pendulous crooked lip slavered when she indulged in her passionate tempers, and the ribbons and lace hanging from her dirty old cap shook. We knew she listened at the keyholes, for she always appeared when not wanted. The only affection she had was for a fat, dirty, snappy old dog, who followed her about and slept on her bed at night.

There were no bathrooms, but we were allowed to go to the public baths in the town once a month if we paid for the privilege ourselves, and were allowed to wash our feet in the foot-baths ranged round the kitchen once a fortnight, on Saturday night. I do not know how the French girls looked so spotless and dainty, for in spite of soaking hot baths at my Aunt's, I felt dirty, untidy, and an outcast. . . .

I had never known what it was before that winter to feel so cold from morning to night that it hurt you and made you want to die. We had bitter weather; there was little

heat in the school. The windows were tight-shut in the long dormitory where I slept with about twelve other girls. The condensations from our breaths settled on the low ceiling, and, freezing there, formed long icicles which we used to pick off—if we left them on, our beds got wet when it thawed. I found this out to my cost, when I left some of them hanging over me, because they were pretty and I liked to look at them as I lay.

My bed stood between Ethel's and that of the poor thin mistress's whom I had so tormented. We made covert fun of the lonely creature because her linen was coarse and old and her night-dress so short; when we all knelt to say our prayers I watched her narrow back in front of me: the soles of her big feet were rather dirty, and her head seemed too heavy for her thin neck. Half of me was filled with loathing for her plainness and half with resentment at the pity that was wrung from me against my will.

At the other end of the dormitory two delicate, lovely sisters slept with rosaries under their pillows. They were later converted to Protestantism and went to our ugly church instead of to the Basilique, where there was grand music, a crèche at Christmas and a smell of incense.

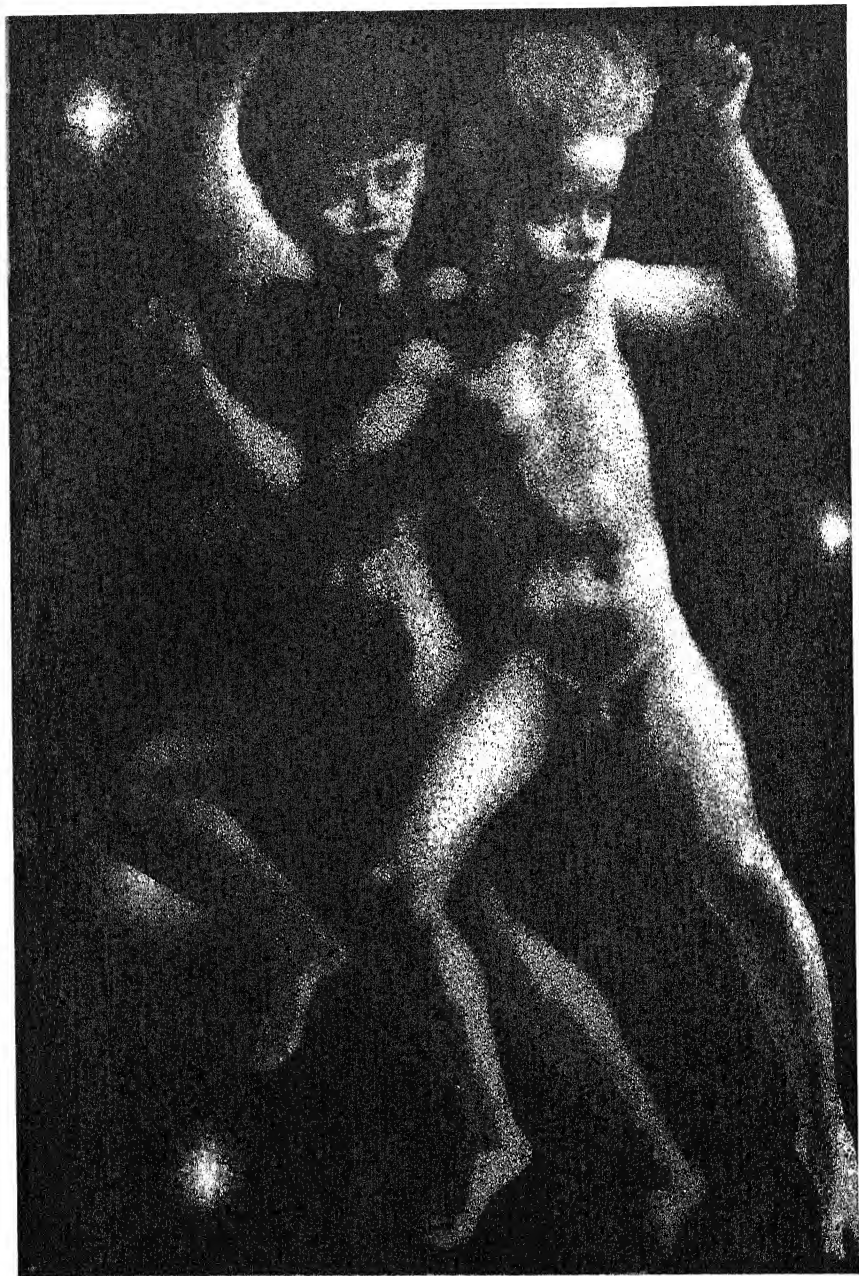
Another English girl arrived at the school, as a pupil-teacher. She was very handsome, with soft fair hair done up the back in curly pats; the black of her grey eyes expanded to an enormous size when she sang, which she did beautifully. She was only sixteen, but knew all about life.

I had seen and heard nothing of Aunt West for some weeks when one day this new girl returned from her English classes in the town; I had heard nothing of the gossip she had retailed until I came into the classroom—a general titter went up and all moved their seats away from me—I was in for a regular boycott, for the town was agog with details of Uncle West's latest drunken escapade and M. had related all about the particularly lurid bout he had just indulged in—that was why Aunt had not been near me.

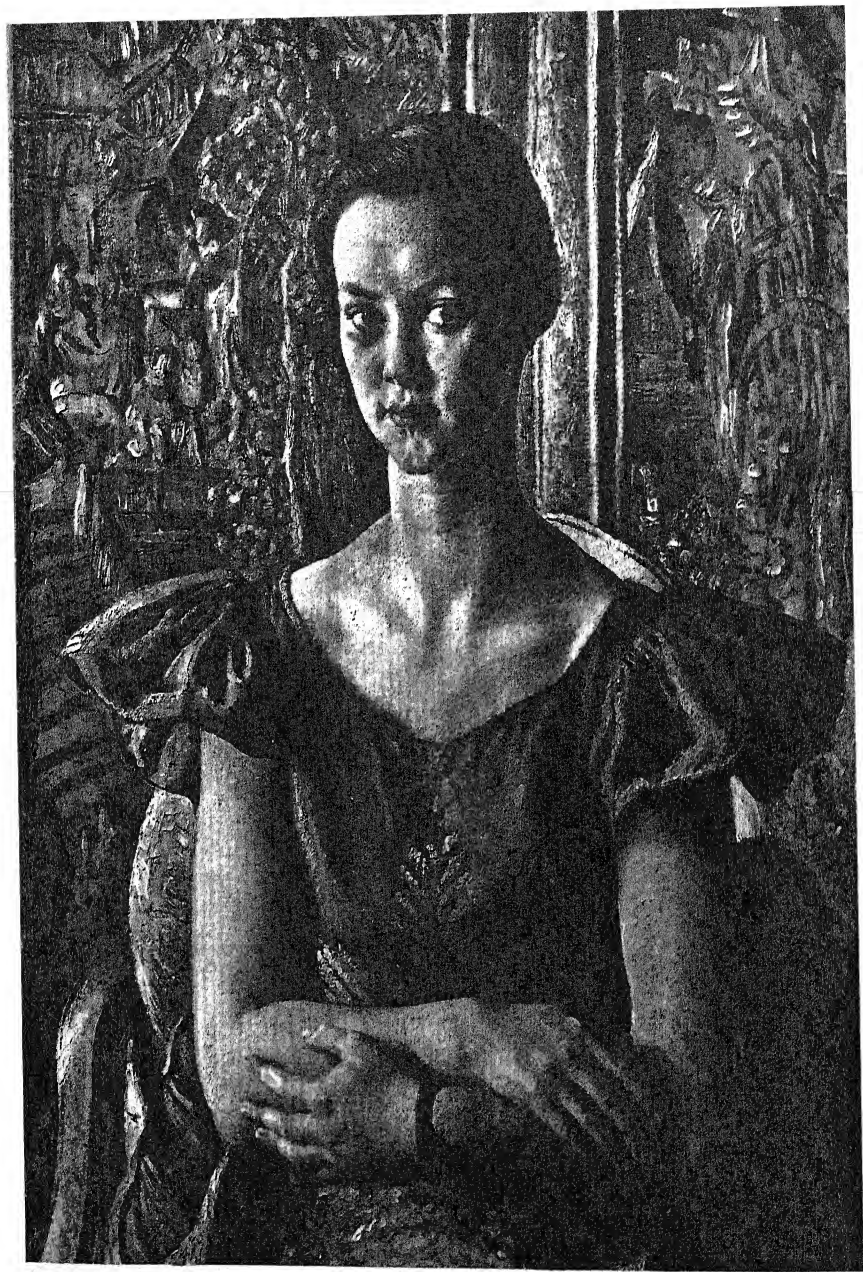
I had always been afraid something like that would happen. I felt utterly alone—there was no sympathy to be had anywhere—I sank lower and lower in childish despair. Perhaps trifling to look back on but at the time deadly and as if life would always be the same. Such trifles piled brick-like, one on top of another, sometimes may make walls for a dreadful prison, from which the only escape is death. Death, suicide were my constant thoughts—but how? . . .

There was nobody to turn to for help. As for Aunt, when I tried to confide in her, she only thought me ungrateful. I could not write to Mother and tell her; she had too many troubles of her own. I had never really recovered from the shock of Nellie's death. At nights I tried to will her to come to me. The girls said all sorts of things like that could be done if you tried hard enough and that the young preacher at the church could look right through you and read your thoughts. I dreaded fearfully lest he should read mine.

Ugly threads were being woven into the material of my character. I shook hands with hate; he and morbidity were my bed-fellows. I went to sleep planning how to get out of the house and throw myself into the canal. I contemplated jumping out of the windows, but that was no use; I should only bounce off the roof of the outside lavatories underneath, even if I did succeed in opening a window without being caught. I got used to waking in the mornings with, as bed-companion, the big pen-knife that Uncle West had given me still lying open in the bed ready for the cut I had been too cowardly to give. . . . I pictured all the girls waking—their horror at seeing the pool of blood which had dripped through the bed on to the floor! A glorious play to enact in imagination with myself as the heroine! The sense of being so completely inferior was not possible to bear. But one thing saved some shred of self-respect: had I not known that I could draw better than any of them and I was going to be an artist such as none of them could ever be, I might actually have committed the deed.



GEMINI
(*Aquatint*)
1932



MISS THOMPSON
1932

Suddenly, however, things began to improve. M. was dismissed from the school at a few hours' notice, during which time it was her turn to be the boycotted one—we were forbidden to speak to her or even to bid her good-bye; we peeped and saw her packing her box all alone in the little room next to our dormitory. We were mystified! Although I felt sorry for her, I could not help feeling pleased when I saw her go. Mother's influence was waning. "Think and speak not ill of anyone," she had often instructed.

There had been happy moments as well as unhappy ones—when Uncle and Aunt West took me to fairs, circuses and markets.

We sometimes went to see the pastels by Latour in the Museum, the town's pride.

At the new year we went round to Aunt's friends with cards and presents to "*Souhaiter la Nouvelle Année.*" We would be shown into the best room where was generally a large bed over which the bedclothes were spread without a crease; a stick having been used on which to roll them each time it was made.

Some Sundays I spent at the Schmidts' house, when Madame and her daughters cooked the many-course dinners, and sat down to the table as elegant as if they had never done a day's work in their lives. They all laughed to see me eat so much, and one of the sons filled and refilled my glass with red wine and water, until I found it difficult to walk the parquet of the long drawing-room afterwards.

Spring-time came and life seemed worth living after all. Now I could follow the classes in French and I had hardened, was able to hold my own against anyone. Home seemed a long way off, Mother's face grew vague.

When, in the Champs-Élysées, on the other side of the Rue du Gouvernement, the trees were coming into leaf, the whole school was invited to spend a day on a farm in the country. I remember the early start in the mist, the gently undulating country, the canals bordered by lines of poplars, all bowing gracefully over in one direction, the

dust and heat of the long white roads, our raking thirst, the many pints of cider Ethel and I drank when we arrived, and how we crept into the stackyard to sleep.

Easter came; eggs were dyed with berry juice, violet like the ink we used. A girl's brother spent the day with the boarders who were still at school—he played with me all day; I expected to get into trouble for monopolising our visitor, but instead, gained the respect of all. "It was thou he wanted to be with all day; he is thy lover," a mistress said.

Confidence returned, I began to get quite fond of all the people I had hated so much. I was quite happy to stay till I could speak French as well as Ethel and then go to Paris to learn to paint.

In Mother's weekly letters there had been an under-current of misery, impossible for her to hide; things at home were evidently going from bad to worse. One Sunday Aunt West had news: the crash of the factory in Nottingham was about to come. Aunt said, "I'm going to find the money to pay off the mortgages to the bank and start the works afresh; I can't go on paying for you as well, so you must go back home."

I stayed that night at my Aunt's, sleeping little, for, little actress that I was, I was already making up my mind for the Supreme Sacrifice. I would give up everything and go into Aunt and Uncle West's factory as a hand, a lace clipper for preference, and my wages should be sent home as a financial help. Whether Aunt West agreed when I told her in the morning I do not know; but I went back to school feeling a heroine. This feeling lasted until a horrified letter came from Mother—I did not know whether to be glad or sorry when she said, "On no account whatsoever." The feeling that I was about to do something noble had been grand. "Besides," Mother added, "it is useless to try to save the business, it would only be throwing good money after bad." So I stayed on at school.

One day in early summer I received a message to go down at once to the head mistress's room. I found Aunt West

sitting on one of the hard, upright chairs by the table, her eyes red with crying; Grandma had the grippe and was not expected to live; if we wanted to say good-bye we must go at once.

I told everyone I was coming back, though I feared it to be untrue. I was afraid to go home—afraid of the distress there. I had known all the people at No. 35 Noel Street in another life altogether. It was a wrench to leave Ethel; even Mademoiselle Mollard did not seem so bad after all. I was used to my hard seat on the form in the classroom and my desk on which I had cut my initials and filled them with violet ink.

For the journey Aunt made me wear a Scotch cap that Mr. Cruickshank had given me, made of grey tweed with a peak in front like a man's, the top had a gathered fullness in front. All the way back to England I was conscious of the awful impression such a cap must be making on the French people—it had no *chic* whatsoever!

CHAPTER III

STUDY

OF the journey to England I remember little apart from my loathing of that cap and Aunt's fear lest she should not be in time to have a last few words with her sister. It was after ten o'clock at night when we reached Nottingham; we had been able to get little refreshment on the way, so passing the Theatre Royal at the top of Market Street, Aunt West stopped our cab and we both went into the bar of the hotel for a drink, as if it were a café in France. English beer tasted horrid, and I felt it was not *comme il faut* for us to be there at all.

We seemed to sink right up to our ankles in richness when we stepped over the doormat at No. 35, the carpets were so thick and everywhere was crowded. Uncle Arthur was the only one up. We were not too late to see Grandma, who had taken a turn for the better—danger was over. We went to her room; she was wearing a frilled night-cap, and lying in her big canopied walnut bed with blue silk rep curtains that had a yellow satin key border edge and yellow pockets, where she put her watch and rings when she retired.

Mother and Sissie had gone to the workman's dwelling into which the family had to move, as guardians for the belongings they had carried across after their day's work was done—something had to be saved.

Aunt and I were preparing breakfast in the kitchen when Mother and Sis arrived next morning. I had been nervous before they came for I felt a complete stranger; that year in France had been a lifetime. When Mother arrived I was afraid to hug her as I used to do and she burst into tears—I felt impatient. Sis seemed as unknown as a

new girl at school; her complexion was startlingly pink and white; I was the taller and she seemed to me a mere infant.

Mother had cried for three reasons, it appeared: because Nellie was absent from the reunion, because of my unresponsiveness, and because I looked such a guy; my enormous bulk horrified her particularly, but the cause of this turned out to be a thick grey woollen undergarment which had originally been cut for Aunt West.

We were going to be sold up in a few weeks' time and the Raleigh cycle people, who were then making their fortunes, were going to live in No. 35. They bought most of our things. The furniture that was taken across to our new home looked ridiculously big and handsome there. The night we moved in, Mother, Sis and I had to undress on our beds; we could not put our feet to the floor of the attic that was to be our bedroom, because of the bundles of clothes tied up in dust sheets that lay everywhere.

We had sat round the table in the minute kitchen, sharing a bottle of wine smuggled from the old cellars. Uncle Arthur made fun of our misfortunes and christened the new house the "*Bijou Résidence*."

A family conclave had been held the day Aunt West and I arrived, and it was decided that without delay I should begin serious study at Nottingham Art School. I was then thirteen years old. Mother took me the very next day to sign on as an artisan student, so that she would not have to pay big fees. I had to give my intended profession and I spelt it TEATCHER. Through Mother's influence I went straight into the Life Class, but for head and drapery only. Women were not allowed to draw from the nude.

The student there for whom everyone predicted a great future was Harold Knight, a pale, black-haired young man. "It is a pity you can only speak French!" he would say ironically when I was at a loss for an English word.

When Aunt West went back to France, I parted from her

with a pang. In spite of her complexities she had a grand side to her nature; we had loved and quarrelled by turns. After all, she, with Grandma and Mother, were the bulwarks of the family. No matter what the men-folk did those three remained staunch through any hurricane of drunkenness, disaster or death.

Mother had planned that I should go to university classes on general subjects several nights in the week; I never did so. Mother said I would grow up a complete ignoramus, but she could not force me to go—I revelled in being able to draw all day.

We worked hard at that school; all the serious students started at half-past nine in the mornings and left at half-past nine at night. We had an hour for dinner and three hours between the afternoon and evening classes. I never missed a class during that first year, and made tremendous progress. We were enthusiastically taught by a new Life master, Wilson Foster, who had an enormous hooked nose, a master hard to please. He had just come back from years spent in the Paris and Antwerp ateliers; his knowledge of anatomy was meticulous; an exact understanding and appreciation of the model was his ideal; there his interest ended; of anything beyond he knew nothing, but he taught us how to construct a figure and head. We might have fared much worse. Some brilliant studies were done by Harold Knight, who was the star student.

I used to manœuvre to place my easel directly behind his, to see exactly how the work should be done. When he started a head by drawing the eye first I did so too, as he put in a stroke I put one in. If he shaded the background from left to right, I copied the way he did it. I even tried to copy what he looked like and make my round rosy cheeks hollow and pale like his, until one day when I was sucking them in, someone asked, "What are you pulling that face for?"

I was the only serious girl student and was often alone with the men in the head class. Not always so serious; one day by way of a joke some of the men kissed my foot; when

Harold had implanted his kiss, without a smile he went to the shelf, got a bottle of fixative and sprayed my shoe. If the men worked from the living figure I had to go into the Antique Room; the hatred of those plaster figures stays with me to this day—I never got any benefit out of their study, and through working from them so much a woodenness came into my work that took years to eradicate.

Mother often came to the evening classes; I was both proud and shamefaced when it became evident that my drawing was in advance of hers. She said nothing, but I, knowing how I should have felt in her place, grieved on her account, but she accepted the blow bravely. I remember her lovely look one night sitting on a stool, with a high colour on her cheek-bones, flushed with the heat of the stuffy life room.

I made my lines much too heavy; they said, "Your work is strong, like a man's." "Why don't you develop your feminine side?" "You must draw from your wrist, not your shoulder." Time after time I was called into the head master's room to be talked to seriously. Tears came when I got to the door; I could not do what they wanted—apparently I possessed no womanly refinement.

The first year at the Art School, however, was perhaps one of the happiest in my life. We were not content with the long hours allotted to us; Saturday our holiday would find several of us at work at the usual hour in the Life Class doing compositions or painting each other. We have in our possession now a portrait Harold did of me at the age of fourteen; it is remarkably good.

At home everyone was more cheerful and full of hope for the future. Grandfather's big business that had dragged so hopelessly had been finally drowned in its own mortgages. We had moved to a little bigger house, in Oliver Street; the rent was very low, probably on account of the fact that it overlooked the general cemetery. Uncle Arthur was starting an entirely new business, the manufacture of bobbins and carriages, certain fittings appertaining to lace machines,

in which he was expecting to do well after the inevitable few years of struggle. Mother was getting a large number of new pupils for the classes she held in our front sitting-room, her studio as well. She had also sold one or two pictures.

During that period Grandma, seventy-nine years of age, did the cooking and washing for all of us, with the help of an inexperienced daily girl of fourteen whose weekly wages were half a crown. Our dinner generally consisted of soup made out of two pennyworth of bones, for we could rarely afford meat.

Mother was tormented with the thought that something could have been done to prevent Nellie's death. She picked up each trifle that had belonged to Nellie every time she went to her own top drawer: the crimson velvet bow, the box of medicine that had been bought as the last hope of giving strength. Mother never recovered from the fear that she had made Nellie work too hard—she had been so anxious to safeguard our futures. "If the doctor had not gone out of town that Sunday he might have saved her—he had broken down when he had come back and found her dead."

A year after I had returned home from France Mother took a class of students to Winchester for the summer holidays. While she was away, I went with a young girl friend to sketch by the Trent at Wilford; we planned to go every day and paint a lot of landscape and climb trees—I do not know which we were the more enthusiastic about.

When I got home Grandma was waiting to tell me, "Your mother has broken her leg." She had fallen as she was stepping back from her easel. Grandma said I should go to her at once—I was the only member of the household who was free. I remember behaving badly and saying I did not want to go.

I was terribly contrite when I found Mother lying helpless in her lodgings.

In Winchester that year a spectacle attracting as much interest as the cathedral itself was a big ash tree, a real

phenomenon; no one had ever seen so many berries—a mass of scarlet. One morning when I went to the Close where it was, I saw a crowd of people standing round all that remained of that magnificence—just a rotten stump, by the side of which lay the top, like a flower picked and thrown down. The wood of the trunk could be rubbed to powder between your finger and thumb—there had been no wind. It had destroyed itself with the exuberance of its own glory. . . .

I could never dissociate the breaking of that tree from that of my mother's life. All thought her such a splendid creature, she was so handsome; she looked so radiantly strong and full of life. When we went back home a doctor told her she had at most two years to live. . . .

Uncle, in desperate hope, took Mother to Birmingham to see a specialist. Once more I bade good-bye to someone I loved, who said, "I shall never see you again, Laura!" This time I did not think I should.

Mother had been half bread-winner to our home. There was only one course open: though only fourteen I must teach all her pupils, put my hair up and try to pass myself off as twenty years old. I was frenzied with fear at the thought of having to do it.

Everyone who knew Mother was sorry, and nearly all her pupils agreed to give me a trial till she was well again—she could not give up hope. Her studio now became her sick-room. My studies at the Art School were cut down. On market day when there was a cheap ticket, I went to Melton Mowbray to different houses there; at one, a luncheon-tray was brought when I had finished the class—the food was so good I used to linger over it to make it last as long as possible. Other days in the week I visited big houses round Nottingham, one of which was set in a large park; the people there were so mean—they were always lessening my fees, until it became not worth while going at all. Another house had men-servants to open the door—I never was able

to distinguish who was the master of the house and who the butler until I realised that the butler was the handsomer of the two. One of the girls I taught, who was older than I, asked me, "Have you come out?" Some of my students were children, some over forty. I drew over their work in a bold way lest they should consider me incompetent; the only pupil I lost was a boy whose mother considered it unwise to continue after the first lesson. I could not understand why I should be dismissed for I thought I taught him a lot during the hour.

My greatest trial was having to go back to my old school as drawing and painting mistress. It was only two years since I had sat on the benches with the younger girls, and now I had not only to teach my former classmates, but the elder girls as well. Moreover, it was difficult to make them realise that I knew more than they—often I was well aware of covert sneers, when to restore their confidence, I swanked how I could draw an elaborate piece of ornament—both sides simultaneously with two pieces of chalk on a black-board, an awesome feat to anyone who has not practised it.

But when the head mistress asked me to teach still life painting in water-colours I was really up against a difficulty—I dared not tell her that I knew nothing of water-colour painting. "What shall I have ready for them to do next week?" she asked. Without stopping to think of something easy, I said, "A glass of water and an orange." On Sunday I took a glass of water and an orange up to my cold bedroom at the top of the house and tried to find out how it should be done. I grouped these objects on the chest of drawers and with paper pinned on a board propped on the dressing-table, I made my attempt with Mother's old paint-box; the paints were mildewed and as hard as stones—I could find no colour resembling an orange—I never thought of leaving white paper for the high lights on the glass and the white paint I put on showed dark grey—the paper cockled and would not dry. I was petrified with cold and frightened lest I should be found out! Mother was in pain that day and I

could not go to her for help. All I remember of the ensuing lesson is that I took care not to touch any of my pupils' work; they seemed to know how to paint much better than I.

I envied some of the other girl students at the School of Art. They talked, wasted time, and could come as they wished to any classes and seemed to have no terrible burdens on their backs as they joked and laughed.

At home we were terribly short of money. No nurse could be provided for Mother. For a short period nuns came in every day for a few hours to help with the nursing, but that soon came to an end, they could not continue—it was lasting too long. Grandma sat up at night till it became impossible for her to do so any longer. Then Sissie and I had to take turns. The hours between two and six were terrible; we had to pinch and punch ourselves to keep awake.

Sissie succumbed under the strain and was taken away by relatives—the doctor said she might die. Dark shadows came under her eyes as if she were an old woman. The same relatives who took her away sent a joint and other scraps of food to us every Saturday, and on Sunday when we sat down to the beef or mutton, Uncle Arthur would say, "God bless our cousin John." But the crumbs from the rich man's table held the flavour of patronage.

Mother was pleased that I should have Harold's friendship; without it that year would have been unbearable. She asked him to come one day; he and I sat on the old red-plush sofa at the foot of her bed, while, although I was only fourteen, some understanding was made between him and her—I was tormented by the feeling that too much was being taken for granted. We did not exchange rings; neither of us could have afforded such expense, had we thought of it.

That year was one of forlorn hope. As if the devil himself were playing like a cat with a mouse, never delivering the *coup de grâce*, just laughing as he let go for a moment, only to pounce again. A dread of life and an awful fear of the future was born in me. I counted up how many more there

were to die before my turn would come, resenting love that made parting so hard.

A clergyman came and while he was telling Mother to take her troubles to God, my sister, who was staring out of the window, broke in with, "We do not believe in God."

God? There seemed to be no God near that stifling house, burning hot even in the night that fearful summer.

One night Uncle Arthur and I were in the tiny room next Mother's where we had our meals. We could eat nothing, misery lay over us in a pall. Suddenly Uncle jumped up. I was told later he had gone behind to the waste-land, covered with old cans and rubbish and frequented by cats who howled like lost children, and been most terribly sick. He was never his humorous self now; he said so little, I never knew what he felt.

I remember our poor food that none of us could touch and Mother's half-empty bottle of champagne, standing upside down in a bowl of water, so it should keep its fizz.

I remember Mother insisting I should go to some friend in Richmond for a week. I went with Harold; he was going for the summer course at South Kensington. One ecstatic day was spent in Kew Gardens, then came a telegram:

"Mother worse come back at once."

When I got back home faint hope had been born again, for the last time.

Mother went peacefully at last. The sense of slackened tension and relief was overwhelming, even in the midst of grief I wanted to shout as well as cry. The waiting, waiting, waiting was over.

She was buried in the same grave as Nellie and Little Grandma. She had given instructions that she should be put away in a deal box with a piece of purple cloth to hang over it, so no more money should be spent than was necessary, but the undertaker said it would cost more than

the usual oak variety. On the plate was engraved: "Charlotte Johnson died in her 41st year."

At her funeral we wore the black dresses that she had ordered to be ready when wanted. The dressmaker came to discuss them and measure us before Mother as she lay dying. From head to foot of her bed was stretched a length of tulle to keep off the flies. Aunt West had given her this material for a best dress for herself.

In the meantime Uncle West had died, and Aunt West wanted Uncle Arthur to go there to help her with the *fabrique*. Uncle Arthur was quite sorry to leave, just as he was beginning to turn the corner with his own business.

Grandma and I were alone. The house we were in became hateful; we moved to Tennyson Street where our little house was one of a row, all alike, red brick, blue slated, with oak-grained front doors. I tried to arrange the little drawing-room with artistry: the piano should stick out and not be arranged flat against the wall, and the old striped Indian shawl be pinned across to hide its back.

Aunt West helped her sister financially—I continued to teach and study. Harold always came to tea and supper on Saturdays and Sundays, and Mr. Cruickshank visited us when he was in Nottingham. Sissie was recovering and still living with relations, so for a time, though alone, Grandma and I were peaceful and almost happy. I had to tell her everything that had happened to me when I came home and she was always as enthusiastic as I over each fresh model we had at the school and the colour scheme I was going to try to paint: one dark girl we had at the school was dressed in yellow and I arranged a gold background behind her—every day the first question Grandma asked was, "How's the 'Yellowboys' getting on?"

Grandma's handsome sealskin coat, a relic of past splendours, was seldom worn and I noticed it was getting far too big for her. Months passed and she too became subject to serious attacks. Sis and I helped to nurse her during another period of hopeless and seemingly interminable waiting.

Sis and the nurse had gone down to have tea one Sunday evening leaving me alone. I heard a noise, and turning from the window where I had been staring through the yellow Venetian blinds I looked and saw Death take her. The horror of that picture and the jangle of church bells outside—I have hated the sound ever since!

Even though I saw Grandmother die and with my sister helped the woman to prepare her for her coffin, it was impossible to believe that she too had gone away and left us. I went constantly to her door standing to listen if I could hear her move. It was dreadful to leave only a sheet to cover her and the window open, but I dared not unlatch the door. . . .

CHAPTER IV

STRUGGLE

"I'LL be a mother to you two poor orphans!" exclaimed the kind-faced woman, when, with tears in her eyes, she asked quite a good rent for her two unfurnished rooms.

Another sale and clearance had taken place. We had asked to be allowed to retain enough furniture for our use, and some particular pieces of china—the "Worcester" vases and the enormous Crown Derby jar that Grandma used to fill with dried rose-leaves from Uncle's garden. This jar had holes in the lid and a green and red and gold dragon on top, and two brother dragons for handles; a relic of the days when Grandma thought nothing of spending a hundred pounds or more on a piece of china. They did not look much in our back room with the high yard wall close up against the window.

At times it seemed dreadful for the two of us to be left by ourselves, though certainly the word "orphan" and the phrase "Cast on the world" gave rise to comforting tears of self-pity, as we hugged our misery with a bitter childish enjoyment. Sis, two years older than I, was only seventeen.

Parting with my cat caused a dreadful pang—a wonder-cat! Our new landlady would not have him in her house—the last straw, and when he was taken away from Tennyson Street, I had to put a cloth over my head; I could not bear to see him go away. The friends he went with loved him, but he just pined away, and I nearly pined away too.

In our new home there was no lock on the bedroom door. It was fortunate that we propped a chair underneath the handle before we went to bed, for on the second night we awoke in a fright—someone was trying to get in. Many times after that we heard the handle turned, but we were

safe; we always pulled a chest of drawers up in front of the door, but several times we were awakened by someone turning the handle.

The house, quiet and empty all day, at night came to life—we never knew who the people were who walked up and down the passages at all hours.

It had been arranged for us to use the kitchen stove for our cooking, but the fire was lit only once a week, so we had to live on eggs boiled with great difficulty in front of our own gas-fire—lucky when we could afford eggs at all. We had no money for clothes and had only one winter coat between us, which made it impossible to go out together in cold weather; Sis had to wait for her walk till I came back from school.

We ought to have written and told Uncle Arthur that half of the five pounds he sent us monthly had to be paid in rent. We knew, however, that he could ill spare the money and that Aunt West had to retrench after the sums she had disbursed during our family troubles. I did not like to tell them there had been a falling off in the number of pupils, lest they should consider it my fault. Then there were expensive painting materials which had to be bought.

Our Spartan upbringing had something to do with our silence. Mother's phrase, "You must be independent," haunted us and prevented our complaining. For years we neither saw nor heard anything of our relations in the town—possibly they were afraid of incurring responsibility, and we were too proud to go to them uninvited.

I did less and less well at the Art School. We became more and more depressed.

We were wallowing in a slough of misery when one day Mr. Cruickshank arrived like a Great Big God. We must have a holiday by the sea at once; he would pay for it; Harold should go as well; where was it to be? We went to a farm near the sea at Ingoldmells by Skegness. We were in and out of the water all day; we raced on the shore and ploughed our way through the soft sand of the dunes.

We returned home in a normal frame of mind, and on Mr. Cruickshank's advice wrote to Uncle Arthur, who by return sent money for moving. We found rooms over a dairy in Park Street. There, too, we experienced hard times and life was difficult, but we could face it—gloom had gone.

My work had been going backwards instead of progressing, separate Life rooms had been built at the school, the women and men no longer worked together, and I missed the more serious attitude of the men students. I tried without success to get work with a lithographic firm: no photographers could be persuaded to let me do their crayon enlargements. The lack of the nude model pressed hard on me. The statuary became more and more of a bore, till realisation came that I must soon leave and strike out on my own account. Mother had always told me to consider the work at the Art School merely as a preparation for something more important.

I lived in the hope that Aunt West would send me to Paris. Had I been a boy, she would have kept her promise—but what was the use of spending money on a girl, particularly when she was going to marry? Perhaps she thought I had really not so much talent after all.

Sis and I often sat up at night hatching the wildest plots. If only we could have got enough money together to last a few months in Paris, we would have risked anything that might have happened afterwards. I could always come back to Nottingham and teach again, I thought.

We saved every copper we could, and gloated over them like misers. We denied ourselves even necessities; our clothes were held together with darns; we scarcely had shoes to wear; the uppers of mine wore away, each big toe stuck right through. One day at the Art School I looked down and saw my nail showing through my stocking as well, so I went into a corner and put a dab of black paint on it.

We lived for several years mostly on porridge and tea

and bread and butter—the only way of saving. Usually after about two months on that diet our throats refused to function; when we put the oatmeal in our mouths, it went round and round and would not go down, no matter how hungry we were; we had to eat better food for a week or so before starting porridge diet again.

Sis looked after the rooms and our clothes; it was difficult for her to get any job worth while that she was strong enough to take; she had no certificate as a teacher and no other qualifications. Our hoard of coppers never became a big sum of money, for the rent and gas bills swallowed our savings, so our plans came to naught.

I continued to give private lessons. To lose no more time than possible from my own work, I often taught between afternoon and evening classes at the Art School. In the winter I sometimes arrived wet through after a long walk from the other side of the town. A cab was out of the question; I was only getting five shillings for each lesson. I had become a scholarship student, and this meant twenty-five pounds a year; regular attendance there was compulsory. On Saturday mornings I took a class of board-school teachers which added another ten pounds to my yearly earnings.

I was constantly sending drawings to publishers to try for illustrative work, but it seemed I had no talents in that direction. I tried for all the competitions in the *Studio*, but success came only once with three guineas for a drawing of a head. A rest or a holiday was a thing almost unknown; no one without my sturdy constitution could have gone through the strain which told even on me and most certainly affected my progress. I was only vaguely aware of this until the masters at the school showed their disappointment.

I was upheld by the certainty that things would improve. I had an unbounded faith in my capacities.

It seemed a pity that, having made such an early start, so long should have to be wasted in aimlessness. I thought of writing to all sorts of strangers for help and a chance to show

what I might do—the Queen herself—anyone. Those letters were never written. Perhaps there were much better students of my age in other schools, I thought. If I went somewhere else, my work might be considered nothing at all. If I could not get the sort of paper and charcoal I was used to my work might be an awful mess.

Sometimes during that period I had the feeling of being caged and handcuffed. Though valuable time was passing, both Sis and I were young, and our almost sordid life had its glorious moments when we romped and played and chased each other over and under our beds, jumped over chairs and did high kicks. We were irrepressibles and “I have a feeling that something is going to happen to-morrow” would often be our last words before we said good-night!

Every Saturday afternoon Harold came for tea armed with cakes, a pork pie or sausages and a pile of the latest magazines; *Harper's* was looked forward to with the greatest eagerness on account of the Howard Pyle illustrations. Harold would sit in the old crimson-plush armchair that had come from our old home while Sis and I got tea ready. We then ranged ourselves round the table, each with an open book propped up in front of our plates. We used to call them our Saturday-reading-teas.

Young as we were, death was familiar, but it was while we were living over Park Road Dairy that we realised birth for the first time. One night frightening sounds came from the bedroom next to our sitting-room; however, all was quiet when we woke in the morning except for an occasional pale treble cry, and we found that a new male child had come to the house, who was going to be every inch as good a milkman as his father.

One summer Sis went to St. Quentin to stay with Uncle Arthur and Aunt West. I did not sweep or dust for weeks and lived on boiled eggs and strawberries which could be bought from the stalls in the Market Place for three half-pence a pound. Washing tea-towels was the worst task; I put one after another to soak until able to wash them all

together and found one day that they had all turned to an evil-smelling jelly which had to be thrown away.

Every evening after class I made cocoa and ate cream crackers and then when the house was quiet I would strew the crumbs to watch the mice come—they ran all over me. All day I looked forward to my midnight companions.

Sis was still away when holidays came. Two days were spent cleaning up before leaving for Ingolmells, where I was going with Harold and his sister. In the flat country you could smell the sea while still in the train, miles away from the coast; the first sniff was exciting, and soon after you got out on to the platform you could taste the salt on your lips.

We had to climb steps to get into the yellow phaeton that met us at Skegness. That carriage was at least a hundred years old. On our bill our journeys in the old yellow phaeton were put down as so many "cominers" and so many "goiners"—it was quite difficult to decipher the weekly account; the currants we had from the garden were spelt "corins." The cock turkey in the yard was our terror, we dared not go near him, and when the farmer's wife had to cross the enclosure he jumped up and pecked her bent back all the way, but she just walked along and took no notice. The mosquitoes were even more savage, so much so that I had to bandage my face every night. They then concentrated on my nose.

The sea was a sandy-brown colour, like mud. Harold's young brother Edgar joined us. He did not wash the whole time; he said bathing was enough. As the sea made him dirtier-looking when he came out than when he went in, we were thoroughly ashamed. His most treasured possession was a photograph of himself in football kit, looking very stern and important with his arms folded across his chest, which, though almost non-existent, was well thrown forward so as to squeeze out his deltoids and biceps—Sandow!

Both Harold and I had taken materials and we painted several pictures over old School of Art studies. Neither of

us did anything we valued afterwards; the brown sea and the monotonous dunes were not inspiring, and effects on land and sea we had no understanding to grasp, for all our training had been to paint objects close to.

News came from the School of Art that in the National Competition at South Kensington I had been awarded the Princess of Wales' Scholarship, twenty pounds a year for two years. I was to receive also a gold medal for a painting from the antique and several silver and bronze medals, besides other prizes. The scholarship was given because I had more awards than any other woman in the United Kingdom.

The prospect of having more money was pleasurable, but we did not think anything of the honours. Harold had seen the "pick" at South Kensington and he said they were rotten.

The day after our return home I took the gold medal to a jeweller's to sell, who tried to persuade me not to part with it, but when I insisted he weighed it and handed over five pounds ten shillings in exchange; the medal meant nothing to me except what it was worth in cash, but Uncle was very annoyed when he heard, he would have liked to keep it. I never thought he would be proud of my getting a gold medal just for a painting of a plaster cast.

The *Queen* periodical wrote to ask for a photograph to illustrate the notice which was to be inserted. It was the first professional photograph I had had taken since a baby. Harold's sister said my expression in it was "I could knock you down for two pins!"

Knowing I was doing no good, I finally made up my mind to leave the Art School. Sis and I got what we called a studio eye searching for a possible room to turn into a studio, as we walked up and down streets examining the upper floors of every building we passed—we even went over factories and workshops, some quite suitable, but no one was allowed to live there. At last we thought we had found the ideal—for twenty pounds a year. Castle Rooms it was called,

just at the entrance to the Park, a road actually cut through the Castle Rock. The Park was a good address for pupils, and people might even come there to have their portraits painted. . . .

Our front door opened right on to the road; a long flight of stone steps led to two rooms, above that again was a room that had been used for dancing-classes. Three sides of the building were of rock, on which battens were nailed to hold a covering of stretched canvas and wall-paper, and before we had our new home freshly redecorated with white paper we could see the living stone through the rents in the cloth—quite romantic to be living in a cave. . . . The landlord pointed out its great advantages. “Cool in summer, warm in winter,” he said. We found it to be the reverse; in the warm weather the lead roof of the studio turned the room into an oven; on the lower floor the cold and dampness were terrible; anything left there grew fungus like fur in a week and the joints of furniture came unglued and fell apart.

We hung gold-coloured art serge at the studio windows, covered our divan beds with the same material and we placed the Crown Derby jar with the dragons on the old oak chest in which all Grandma’s children had learnt to walk. Then there were the big white and gold Worcester vases—none of the china had ever looked so handsome as it did against the white walls of that large room. The red-plush sofa from the old drawing-room was all wrong in a studio, but we could always throw the striped Indian shawl over it.

One night, soon after we had settled, we were awakened by what we thought was a man walking across the room. It was only a rat bounding across the floor. These squealing creatures often came out to visit us, until we found their hole in the rock wall of our coal cellar. . . . In spite of these slight disadvantages, Castle Rooms was a glorious place to work in, especially after we had spent three pounds on having a skylight put in the studio roof, so I left the School of Art with the pleasurable prospect of painting all sorts

of masterpieces, and one idea was going to be a sensation if it could be carried out. Alas, there was no money to spend on model and materials!—I had been captivated with my banal scheme of a young and emaciated young woman who was to have been sitting in an attic, sewing a magnificent white satin wedding-dress by candle-light. A veil was to have come in somewhere, because tulle is nice to paint and the remains of a scanty meal and a teapot were to be set on a broken chair. It was to contain all the pathos of "Stitch, Stitch, Stitch"! I had not forgotten my old friend Thomas Hood.

Harold left the School of Art at the same time as I. He had been offered a mastership there, which he did not dream of accepting. To do so meant an assured living, but an equally certain death as a painter. However, a year before we left, Harold had won the British Institute Travelling Scholarship which consisted of fifty pounds a year for two years; with it he could go wherever he wished. The first year he spent in Nottingham, saving what he could for Paris the following year.

We had a farewell supper at Castle Rooms the evening he was to leave. It was too awful having to bid Harold good-bye for so long. . . . Sis cooked a sirloin of beef for this very special event. Unfortunately the meat was tough and rather overdone, so perhaps that was why most of it was left uneaten, although such a treat. The tears that would run down the sides of my nose dropped into the gravy on my plate and made oily white rings—grotesque touch in the midst of misery.

In spite of it, after Harold had gone we were soon in bed asleep and it seemed that only a moment had passed—in reality hours—before, at five o'clock a loud rapping sounded on the front door. We looked out of a window and by the light of a gas lamp we could see Harold standing on the doorstep—he had missed his train—a joyful reunion. Never have fried bacon and tea tasted so good as they did

at that early breakfast. When he left a second time we did not feel so sad; soon he would be knocking on the door again.

I too should have liked to try for that scholarship, but for me it was impossible—the subjects to be submitted for judgment included studies from the nude. I had neither the chance of a figure model nor the knowledge necessary to carry out the work.

Sis and I had settled down at Castle Rooms. There was space for twenty students to work. I would hold classes, they should have a life model, I would teach them properly. Three mornings a week would be enough. How much would that mount up to in a quarter? It was fascinating to do those mythical sums; lots of money could be saved in a few years and then we should be free to go where we liked. Unhappily, there was no rush for these classes. Again the photographers and lithographers refused to give me work.

I had a fine studio, but what could I do without money for models and no knowledge or ideas beyond a Life class? There was no one to answer that question in all the town, aesthetically a desert. "You'll have to paint pictures some day," Mother had said. "Well, what are pictures, and how do you start doing them, and why isn't a school study of a head a picture?" I wondered.

I could not paint my seamstress, and this was the one thing I wanted to do. I knew they hung that sort of picture at the Academy. Mother had taken us up to London on a half-crown trip; we had left Nottingham at four o'clock on a workman's train, breakfasted at a marble-topped table in a cabman's coffee-house near St. Pancras—the coffee was pale and evil-tasting. We arrived at the Academy at eight o'clock and during the day we visited the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the Wallace Collection and the Grosvenor Gallery. Mother even found time to buy a new mackintosh for me from a shop in the Tottenham Court Road. It was grey and I thought it very smart so insisted

on wearing it in spite of the heat-wave. We spent an hour or two at the early doors for the gallery seats at Covent Garden; we had to leave before the last act of *Cavalleria Rusticana* to catch our train back home. I slept on Mother's shoulder in the crowded compartment. Nottingham Market Place was glorified in the early morning, the faint sun, shining on the square red brick houses I loathed so much, turned the red into a beautiful pinkish grey colour. It was going to be another hot day, but it was impossible to stop shivering. Sis and I were put to bed and slept for nearly two days and nights.

The most important exhibition I had seen at the Castle was one of the Newlyn School, then at the peak of its fame. My favourite picture then was Frank Bramley's "Hopeless Dawn." Tears came into my eyes, I thought it so wonderful. There was also a little grey picture of Newlyn Bridge by Stanhope Forbes; I did not know anyone could paint like that.

In the year 1896 I first tried to compose pictures. Ernest Gillick, who had been a fellow-student at the Art School, was quite enthusiastic about a picture I had painted out of my head, and he never knew what encouragement his few words of praise then gave me.

The town itself would have been fine to paint. The market, the Saturday crowds with their shopping-bags buying their stores and pots off the cobbles and stalls with awnings over them! One bitter winter day I asked an old stall-holder how she bore the cold. "Oh," she said, "it's all right once you get comfortably perished." I might have achieved something if I had had the courage to face the cold and discomfort as she did and to endure the jostling crowd that would have certainly collected. I thought, "Big painters don't do common things like that; the proper subjects to paint are water nymphs and mythological people." But these Venuses and Adonises were beyond my powers. In desperation I took children from the slums as models;

they would come for pennies instead of shillings. I painted my first big picture, "Dressing Dolls." The subject was just four poor children playing at putting their dolls to bed in an attic; soap-boxes had to do for cradles. Hanging at the back was an old print patchwork quilt that Grandma had stitched when she was awake at night. The children often arrived looking very hungry—I gave one little girl a cup of cocoa and something to eat. "You don't need to wash up, I polished the cup and plate off on me 'ankercher'," she told me when I fetched the remains.

One child sat for a half nude, but she came only once. Something was biting her and she could not sit still for a minute; she raked her poor little body till it was covered with weals. I did not know which red marks were anatomy and which inflammation.

I sent "Dressing Dolls" to the R.A., where it was rejected. Eventually I exchanged the picture, the gold frame which had cost three pounds ten included, for three pounds' worth of posing by a male model. Even at that sacrifice I was very pleased to let it go to Jack Price who posed at the school. He was also my model—and patron. I parted with all my old studies in the same way and those marked "medal" or "prize awarded" were quite in demand by Jack's friends at a pound or two apiece. I got much useful figure study that way.

The first portrait I painted was of my Uncle Arthur when he was over on a visit from France, a deplorable effort, although William Hartshorne, a connoisseur and collector who was brought to see it, considered it a masterpiece and his word was thought a great deal of—he was a real Art Patron—his house was crammed from attic to cellar with stacks of canvases he had bought, too many to hang even in a dozen houses.

The result was that "Billy," as he was called, offered me two hundred and fifty pounds a year if I would paint portraits that he obtained for me. A financial crisis of his, however, saved me from that pot-boiling fate. It was a

tempting proposal which I knew no better than to accept: "It might even mean a studio in London!" Uncle's last words before leaving England were, "Put your name to no paper, Laura!"

Billy Hartshorne, besides being a picture-lover was in the lace trade. The bay windows of his "detached" house were so richly hung with plush and lace that you could scarcely see the big seascapes that covered the dining-room walls. These pictures were all painted by Edwin Ellis of great local fame, and Billy was more than ever famous for having been his patron.

An aura of great wealth surrounded Billy. He always had a big cigar in his mouth, his clothes were of the finest cloth and latest business cut. I remember the pattern the black stripes made on his grey trousers, the black cut-away coat, the heavy gold watch-chain, the smell of wine when you talked to him and his knowing dark look. Some years later I met him in the street. "Miss Johnson," he greeted me, "I've been keeping an eye on you—your work's coming on fine; now what you've got to do is—warble between yourself and Goose [Greuze] a bit."

Through the praise of Uncle's portrait I executed a portrait of a successful business-man and was paid five pounds for it. The sittings took place in the afternoons after midday dinner, an unfortunate time to choose—before this gentleman had sat for five minutes he would fall asleep, and I caught his cigar before it burnt him. I am sure it was a very bad painting, but his family was so pleased with it that they gave me another commission, which damned me for ever as portrait-painter to that connection.

To enhance the beauty of the white beard of the deceased old gentleman whom I had to paint from a photograph, I put in a red background. This picture was intended as a present to his daughter, which she knew nothing of. When finished, it looked very handsome in an expensive gold frame and the son-in-law who had ordered it was delighted—the picture was hung in their house as a surprise to the

daughter, who was of course expected to go into raptures. Instead of doing what she should, she fell down in a hysterical fit, screaming that she had seen her father burning in the flames of hell. The portrait came back to me with orders to paint a blue background instead of my crimson one.

Sis and I found a vegetarian restaurant not far away from Castle Rooms where we often went for dinner because we could get a good one that cost only sixpence for both: three halfpence for a plate of prunes and three halfpence for a plate of porridge; unhappily we could not always afford to go there—only when well off, but we had to save up for when the new magazines appeared. We were reading Hall Caine's stories, then appearing in serial form in the *Windsor*—I wanted also to pore over Maurice Greiffenhagen's illustrations in the same magazine. If you went to the restaurant early, or after everyone else had gone, you could get your pick of the literature.

There was a charming young waitress there who told us, "If you boiled my skirt it would make a splendid soup." She had food slopped all over her clothes, for the little room was crowded at one o'clock and everyone was in a hurry. All the young men who went there seemed to have very long necks with Adam's apples that jumped up and down when they ate.

One afternoon one of Harold's sisters came to tell us that Harold had returned unexpectedly soon from Paris. In a breath, she said, "We have put him to bed he looked dreadfully ill thin and tired after a bad crossing and when he took off his shoes to lie down he had nothing but mittens on his feet and all that is left of his socks is a strap under the instep he looks as if his throat has been cut he had a sore throat someone told him to paint the outside with iodine and someone else to put a bread poultice on it the result was a huge blister which slit from ear to ear when he stretched his neck."

The message he sent to me was, "I will come to Castle Rooms in an hour or two."

I spent the interval watching from our studio side windows that were set high up in our front wall. The sunlight moved off the road, which turned a cold grey and the walls of the cut became forbiddingly dark in contrast to the gilded tips of the trees above. I was filled with that awful sick feeling that comes at such exciting moments.

Many hours seemed to pass before I at last saw a man coming along in a long, heavy overcoat. This made me wonder, for it was unbearably hot that July evening in the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. It was really Harold—I could scarcely believe it at first; he had been obliged to wear the big coat, for his only suit was worn through at the knees and elbows, not fit to be seen in the streets.

He had no money left in his pockets. He had lived in Paris for ten months on seventy-five pounds. Travelling, studio, rent, fees at Julian's, materials and living had all come out of that sum.

We both felt a little shy of each other at first, but before the evening was over I had to get a comb and brush and change my hair, which was drawn back from my face, and part it in the middle, drawing it down heavily on either side into a knot at the back of the neck like Cléo de Mérode. In this fashion I continued to wear it for many years.

Harold was full of new ideas, which were hard to follow; he was himself very confused by all he had seen. He started to paint in my studio some work for Formans, the lithographic firm, to try and make a little cash, but I do not think he succeeded. We too were rather low at the time—one of our porridge diet periods had lasted rather longer than it should have done, and this time proved more than Sis's health could stand. She fell quite seriously ill; I had to send for a doctor; each visit cost five shillings. The first time he knocked on our door he startled our cat, who, asleep on a window-sill, forgot where it was and rolled out to land

straight on to a woman's hat, right among the flowers and feathers. When I answered the door, I found the doctor in fits of laughter. He had not seen what had happened above—the incident was only brought to his notice by the woman screaming and trying to get rid of the cat who in its frenzy was clawing her hat to pieces.

Sis did not recover quickly from her illness. Aunt West came from France to see what she could do. We did not know she was coming, so no one was at the station to meet her that early morning. She had forgotten to bring our address, she only knew we lived near the castle so her cabman drove her to the mews in Park Road, and from the men washing their cabs there, her question was met with the question, "Do you mean two round-faced fair young ladies?" So we were found.

We had nothing to give her for breakfast after her long journey; all the food in our house was some tea and bread and half a bottle of brandy that we kept for emergencies. I remember offering Aunt a drink of brandy, and her scornful refusal, "The idea! No, I want tea and some good food."

Our larder was soon filled with luxuries. She and Uncle Arthur had quarrelled and Aunt West was going to stay with us for a long time—"He should miss her properly." We must all go to the seaside so that Sis could get quite well; Harold too should go. "Auh," she said with her long drawn-out French sigh, "to think of you poor children not having proper food. It shall never happen again; it breaks my heart to think about it. You shall be all right in future. Why didn't you write and tell us?" . . . The relief of her warm presence made the world a different place.

One day in the street I met Thomas Barratt, an art master who told me, "Staithes is the place to go to!" He had a cottage there himself and went every summer. "There is no place like it on all the coast for painting," he said. His description was so entrancing that I rushed home to tell Aunt, and Staithes was decided upon for our holiday.

Aunt bought some navy serge and Sis and I set to work

with Mother's old sewing-machine to make up dresses to wear—workmanlike, with knee-length skirts, a contrast to the trailing dresses that every girl wore then.

While Harold had been in Paris, Rosie Good, one of my pupils, had become our great friend. She came to work in the studio and shared my model; a great help. She often spent the night with us, when one of us slept on the sofa.

Rosie met her future husband at Castle Rooms; he was Oliver Sheppard, the modelling master at the school and Harold's great friend, now modelling master at the Dublin Academy. Rosie was a dainty, fair little creature with surprising muscular strength; we were always practising acrobatics together. She had brightened our lives while Harold was away.

All three girls wondered why "Pompus Iscariot," as Harold christened Oliver, should want to come so often in the evenings, until one night the reason for his coming was intimated in this way: we had said good-bye and seen him through the studio door; suddenly on the other side we heard a voice, and all listened to him reciting:

The moon shines bright!
Can you eat a biscuit?
Can you smoke a pipe?
Can you go *a-courting*
At twelve o'clock at night?
The moon shines bright!

Then we heard him give an embarrassed little laugh and footsteps running down our stone steps. An Irishman's declaration of love!

Rosie must go to Staithes with us of course, and "Pompey" would come there for his holidays.

BOOK II

CHAPTER V

STAITHES

THERE was nowhere we loved as much as the Yorkshire coast. We had[']been to Flamborough with Mother on a sketching-trip after I came back from France, when things at home had looked brighter. We had stayed in "Mrs. Woodhoo's Cottage," as it was called, living in the same way as we had done in Derbyshire.

In order to reach Flamborough the same night it had been necessary to make an early start. Mother could not afford the ordinary fare—we had travelled with a series of trip tickets, when we spent hours in all sorts of strange places on our roundabout way, a journey full of surprises.

Aunt West took us to Staithes with proper tickets, though it was with sovereigns, not shillings, that she had to pay at the booking-office!

I remember our joy on seeing the sea again when we got on to the little line that ran up the coast—the air that blustered into the carriage window was strong; it banged the outside of the train in plangent tremolo. On the platform at Staithes our skirts were blown over our heads, our hats flew away and every breath we drew seemed to wash the whole of our insides.

We walked to our lodgings at Mrs. Crooks's in Church Street. Here was a real fishing-village, unspoilt by summer visitors, and Aunt West was indeed an outlandish figure in her black French town clothes; her quick foreign manner made her seem like a being from another world. She could not understand the Yorkshire dialect, nor the fisher-people her French-English.

A black and white cat followed Mrs. Crooks everywhere

even when she was "fettling t'dishes," "siding t'table," or "maakin' t'beds"; even when she went for a walk on the cliff-tops on Sunday evenings.

"If you ever see two lice on your forehead at the same time," Mrs. Crooks warned, "look out for trouble; it means something dreadful is going to happen." She told us how she had looked at herself in the glass on the day her husband was lost in the lifeboat and "there were two walking across."

We were always hungry for our meals of fish freshly caught, kippers cured with oak chips' smoke, and the home-made bread and Yorkshire cakes.

There were so many of us, all could not be put up at that little cottage, so Harold slept down at Tom Porritt's in an old four-poster bed. He developed a rash, and as he could not sleep and was very poorly, we kept him in bed for a day. We sent for the doctor. "Get up at once," he said, laughing, "it's fleas." Harold was then moved into an iron bedstead and suffered no more.

At the bottom of Church Street, next to the old house with the steps where Captain Cook used to live, Harrington and Mrs. Mann were lodging with their two children, one of whom is now the Marchioness of Queensberry. We all admired Mrs. Mann, who looked lovely in the muslin dresses she used to wear. We watched these people from afar, too nervous to scrape acquaintance with established artists.

Everything I tried to paint turned out badly; it was such a whirlpool to be plunged into. The life of the fisher-people, the village itself, rocks and sea; impossible to know where to begin. You could not turn your head without seeing something you wanted to put on canvas—here was material for a landscape painter, a sea painter, a figure painter.

"Steers maun be a queer place to be seer, house all oop i'yar plaice an' doon in t'other, and a great sea a 'wemelin' reet oop t'it," was a description in an old book. Staithes was generally called Steers and sometimes "The hole in the

wall." Built on a slide between two cliffs, houses jostled and jumbled as if they would push each other into the sea—a giant child's box of bricks thrown from the top. Into this chaos of shelter were crowded more than a thousand souls.

The roofs were red tiled or thatched, the walls made of brownish-yellow ironstone, and here and there was a white-washed cottage with green shutters. The wooden quay, called the Staithe, stretched right across the beach, forming a poor protection against a nor'-easter. Two walls of cliff formed barriers on either side; the northern side reached out its rounded arm, along which the Beck ran into the sea from springs on the high moor.

A fit setting for the endless drama coming now so swiftly as to take you unawares, now with the slow pace of fate.

The excuse I offer for writing about Staithes at such length is its tremendous influence on work, life and power of endurance. It was there I found myself and what I might do. The life and place were what I had yearned for—the freedom, the austerity, the savagery, the wildness. I loved it passionately, overwhelmingly. I loved the cold and the northerly storms when no covering would protect you. I loved the strange race of people who lived there, whose stern almost forbidding exterior formed such contrast to the warmth and richness of their natures.

It bordered on the theatrical. There was every range of colour and intensity of light and dark, from the shadowy crowded alleyway to the spread of the sea. A poet should have written his sagas there. Why did no painter paint it as it was then? Its life ranged from the highest pitch of spiritual ecstasy to the depths of sordid tragedy. There was no such village on all the English shores—a place and a people apart. I wish I could go there to work with the power I now have. What would be the use? It is all changed and tamed—the old bridge is gone, a pier has been built, summer visitors bathe in its shelter. Most of the people are dead that we loved and lived with, summer and winter, their few joys, their griefs becoming ours. During

the many years we spent there, they took my sister and myself to their hearts. They were usually a hard people to know, they did not as a rule welcome strangers.

Aunt West had not been at Staithes many days before she showed signs of restlessness. "Is Arthur missing me? Is he being properly looked after? I expect I shall find all those lace girls haven't done a thing while I've been away." She could not take such a holiday, she had never known what it was to be lazy for so long. This went on till she said, "I'm going back to-morrow to see for myself; you can all stay on here till the end of the month."

That month passed all too quickly. I was not made to be cooped in a town and sit in drawing-rooms. It was dreadful having to leave real life and go back to Nottingham. I felt like a cow that had been given one lick of salt, only to have the lump snatched away.

Harold stayed at Staithes, hoping that his father would lend him money to enable him to work there till Christmas. I promised to see Mr. Knight about it. I was very nervous about the interview, but the old gentleman was very pleasant and Harold was allowed to stay.

Letters came telling of big pictures Harold was painting, how he had broken away from Art School influences; of a storm when a vessel passed with all sails blown away and how it went ashore at the base of the cliff; of another, ashore off Baulby Head when the mast fell over on to a ledge, the crew swarmed up and reached safety; a shepherd rescued them. The captain had been drunk when she struck; he went to his cabin saying, "She's safe in harbour!" Later in the day he was found drowned; he must have awakened, walked north and been caught by the tide; if he had turned the other way he would have reached Staithes.

Harold came home at Christmas, all his money gone. He had piles of pictures such as he had never done before. He was really launched as a picture-painter.

As for me, teaching and trying to fake-up pictures in my

studio had been dreary work. I had nothing to show. How could one escape from Nottingham? Youth was being wasted in stupidities. "Let us go to Paris," Rosie suggested. "I will pay your expenses if you will teach me." The idea of working in an atelier nauseated me, so the following year we went instead to Staithes for six months. "It will mean missing only a term's teaching, and perhaps I will have pictures I can sell." . . .

We soon had our first taste of drama. It was too wet to go out that afternoon, gusts of wind blew waterfalls of rain across our windows; fumes from our sitting-room fire belched into our faces as we sat trying to get warm. "They say it's getting wildified and the cobbles are coming back," Mrs. Crooks informed us.

The boats were racing home before a full gale when we reached the quay. There was no winch or any apparatus to help haul them up the steep beach. All but the bedridden were there to lend their weight on the ropes to pull the cobbles into safety. "It's spring tide, and with this gale behind it all is going to be under water they say."

The slipways became jammed; no time could be lost—some of the boats were dragged straight over the quayside. One boat hung on its ropes down the quayside, upright, like a fish drying in the sun. A squeaking groan came from her. "She's gwine to brek her back," we heard voices say, as she balanced amidship on the edge of the quay. Another heave and the two men jumped up to pull her down, and along the top she slid on her runners over the greased oars and pieces of wood that were thrown down, right up into the main street, already so packed with boats it was necessary to climb over them to go to the shops.

Lightning flashed. No thunder made itself heard above the roar of wind and surf. Rain and spume drove horizontally, cutting painfully. Cries of "A-a-a-a-ah-ah-ah" came from the men giving the signal for all to pull together on rope or coble racing up the beach; a being was at every

tholepin and two sturdy men under the bows to give a lift with their buttocks at the proper moment. Screaming sea-gulls whirled in dense masses, blotting outlines of cliffs and cottages overhead—creamy bellies flashed clean against the muck of the sky—impossible to distinguish what was spar and what was boat or what was wooden quay—all individual form disintegrated in confusion. We picked up a hard wet rope and added our weight to the cry of "A-a-ah", and were nearly knocked over when the sudden rush backward came—an oil-clad figure in sea-boots looked round impatiently.

Suddenly all was comparative order. People started to move away. All the boats were back but one, and "She'll have gone to Roonsick for seer!" they said. In a flash tenseness returned. Just beyond Penny Steel something like a fin rose above a breaker—the bows of a coble. The whole boat came into view on the top of a sea, oars waving uselessly, like the legs of a beetle on its back. A warning flare was lit—yet on they came! Everyone on the quay shouted and cheered. "Hooroaring 'em in," it was called. Men cried like children; all the shopkeepers had left their shops untended to see the excitement, even the big red-faced butcher was there, tears pouring out of his eyes as he joined in the yelling. "He thinks the b——rs will be drowned and he'll never get paid for his meat," someone said.

The coble was in the middle of the Wyke now. "If a sea breaks under her she's done," we heard. One of the men lost his nerve, shipped oars, got to his feet—a dark sprawl silhouetted against the whiteness. "Ah, he's back in his seat!" Both men were pulling. "She's all right now; she's in slack water!"

There was a rush of men into the flother to get hold of the line that was thrown as she was pulled up the shingle just as if weighing no more than a feather—there were so many helpers. Arms were thrown round wet shoulders, cheeks were kissed, but in a few minutes the caresses had turned to curses. Reaction had set in—an argument started;

they were fighting before they got to the top of the beach. Harold hustled us back home; even above the noise of the gale, shouts could be heard that were not suitable for young girls to overhear. . . .

Rosie and I shared a studio on the quay, not luxurious, just an empty room in a derelict house, but from the window you could see all that went on and it was easy to go out to make pencil notes when anything special happened.

Work went a little better after a while, but I do not think anyone seeing what I did then would have found much promise in it. I knew my attitude to painting was wrong, and thought there might be some technical trick that would set it right—I fumbled and messed, wasting time, canvas and paper; if only someone could have said, “Go out and paint frankly what you see.” Instead, a wide detour was being made. What influences were at work it is hard to say. I wandered through a slough that led nowhere, and it was only when I forgot about methods that anything was achieved. I do not regret these meanderings; they taught me a great deal, if only what not to do.

There was no experienced painter there whose work I could respect without reserve. Fred Mayor made a brilliant showing, but he was full of tricks that he had picked up here, there and everywhere. Some of his water-colours were quite lovely, and he had a beautiful colour sense when he forgot the Stotts, the Brangwyns and the Melvilles he was so constantly imitating. Mayor worked in fits and starts, sometimes in one man’s manner and sometimes in another’s. I too tried to imitate the methods of these men, whose work I had never seen.

Mayor had a mount he called a “blotter,” into which he slipped paper for colour notes. I too had a blotter made. Blotter was a convenient name, to which Mayor added the prefix “ruddy” when a sketch did not come well. I did my first water-colour about that time and scrubbed it so hard that I made a hole in the thick Whatman paper. I treated

that medium with great violence then, often slicing with a pen-knife bits of paper when a strong light was wanted. I always used hard cake colours, softened by soaking. We all had sketch-books. Many days I was out drawing from morning till night. The training I went through in doing these notes of moving figures has proved an invaluable asset to later work.

Not having money to spare for models I worked from pencil and colour notes in the studio. There were always fresh compositions forming in front of one's eyes: men hauling the cobbles up and down the beach; fish sales when a crowd of buyers were grouped round Jimmy James the auctioneer, a Cornish man; rows of fish and lobsters laid out on beach, rocks or quay; the barrels of crabs, the carts, the women gutting the fish, and the children who paddled and bathed in the rock-pools all summer.

An early winter morning: here comes a woman just back from the mussel-beds; she has been miles away over the rocks at low tide, balanced on her head is about a hundred-weight, she walks with an easy stride as if carrying nothing. Her face is dark and stern—unapproachable—her carriage superb. She wears a tubful of bait for a crown.

Now is a summer evening: the sun is down behind the hills, deep-toned and sharp against the gold of the sky; shadow lies over village, quay and beach, down which rush hurried figures. A man is half-hidden under a heap of purple blackish nets; another balances oars on his shoulders; a boy carries a string of coloured bladders used to buoy up the nets, they look like enormous bunches of grapes strung back and front. One woman swings a "tommy tin" containing a man's food for the night—a bundle of oilers hung over her arm; another woman has a bucket of coals on her head for the bogie fire. Cobbles slide over the timbers with grating sound, here and there they are launched—a sea-booted figure wades and pushes—"She's afloat!" as he flings himself over the stern.

During this, the herring season, one often sees such a

scene, darkly rich against the sea, turquoise splashed with indigo in the last rays of the sun.

The sun gilds the brightly painted cobbles in the Wyke. One boat disappears round Penny Nab, her red-tanned mainsail, mizzen and jibs all set. In another boat a man hauls the sails, Venetian red drapery unfolds on the spar as it mounts the mainmast with jerky rattle. A big mainsail goes up, a patch of shining white that has not yet seen the barking copper. Then suddenly all is still, the last boat out of sight. Bairns play again. Girls sit on the slipway edges, tending babies nearly as big as themselves. The women's knitting-needles click as they stand gossiping on the quay, their figures in sombre black and lavender silhouette.

All the men wore guernseys made by their wives or mothers. I bought one of a handsome cable stitch pattern that, with a short serge skirt, formed part of my uniform for years.

For summer wear Sis and I made dresses of the lilac print that Frankie Seymour sold at his shop for the aprons and sunbonnets all the women wore when not in mourning. The black sunbonnets were even more becoming. The bonnets were well tilted forward to shield the eyes, the strings tied behind to keep them on in a wind, a shapely cap that hid no part of the neck. Their over-skirts were turned up over a red petticoat—down the back the pinned-up drapery fell in folds. Over the shoulders a little plaid shawl was drawn. Arms bare to the elbow made a pretty zigzag line, one akimbo, the other steadying a weight on the head.

The drawing of hands and arms held for me a special interest; I studied their movement every chance I had. Sketch-books were filled with nothing else.

In the only sketch-book that has survived our many clearance bonfires I have found a written note: "Counted twenty-seven patches on a man's trousers this morning."

Wet or dry, nearly all the men wore sou'-westers or seal-skin caps from Russia. One man had a bowler hat always

on his head; he even went to sea in it. He was called "Billy Fanny." I hear he is still alive and over eighty. Billy's body was like a barrel, wide and deep. His shoulders were so broad that when his arms hung loose his hands were nowhere near his narrow hips. His thick wrists were chafed and raw with friction from his sea-soaked guernsey cuffs. Sea-boils these sores were called. The palms of his hands and the insides of his fingers showed shell-pink through perpetual soaking in the salt water and the creases in them were incredibly deep. Through clasping oars and ropes his fingers had curved inwards like crab-claws. His brown eyes twinkled with good humour and mischief; a smile displaying every one of his perfect teeth was always ready. The bowler hat was the perfect finial to the sturdy column he made. We could not imagine him without it, even in bed.

The men rarely undressed completely. Oilers and sea-boots pulled off, they threw themselves on their beds as they were.

Those sea-boots were very personal objects of apparel, reaching up to the top of the thigh. The leather moulded itself to a man's legs, retaining his shape after they were taken off. We used to say we knew to whom any pair belonged, as they stood drying at the doors. I have always wished to paint "Just a pair of boots," but have never done so.

Every garment was marked with the owner's initials; a sinister reminder, "Only a part of the body is found sometimes if the drowned man has been in the water a long time. Then we know who it is by the initials."

What a comfort in the boats were those boots. Oiled, impervious to water, lined with a thick, hand-knitted stocking. But what monsters they turned into when thrown into deep water; they filled in a few moments, dragging down the men inside them to sink like a stone. . . .

There was a cottage vacant at the top of the hill at the back of Staithes and Sis and I installed ourselves there,

hoping somehow to make ends meet by the sale of sketches. I had, too, the promise of a resident student.

I do not know when the last remnants of caution were thrown away. Time came when it was impossible to bear existence in Nottingham. When we left I had a studio full of canvases that were of no account; too many to burn, so we sent them unsigned to auction, where they fetched less than a penny apiece.

Some time later I was dining with a wealthy friend in Nottingham. I noticed on his walls two of these pictures with Edwin Ellis's signature on them in large capitals. Even though they did not resemble Ellis in the least—he never painted figures—my host refused to believe I had done them.

Most of our special friends among the fishermen were called "Argy," short for "Isaac." There was Argy Verrill, Argy Theaker, and Argy Porritt—"Argy by name and Argy by nature" was said of the latter, who lived close to Mrs. Crooks. While we were staying there, he had come nearly every day to discuss affairs in general with Mr. Spence, the lay preacher, who lodged in our kitchen. Argy was a rabid radical. They would not talk for long before argument started; we could hear Argy roaring, "I'll tell you what, mister," and then followed what sounded like a desperate threat. We were frightened until we had Mrs. Crooks's laughing assurance, "Fight? Why, of course they're not going to fight; it's only Argy—he's havin' a bit of a talk like."

All our Argys were pillars of "t'Ranter Chapil," so we too had to go there every Sunday.

Argy Verrill was six feet tall, with a straight back and a fringe of pink whiskers all round a pink, freckled face; his light blue eyes were a shade paler than his complexion. On the backs of his pink hands the freckles showed up like halfpennies. He possessed the gift of unerring aim in ejecting the brown liquid from his "chew"—his expression did not change an atom, nor did his pursed lip appear to move.

When we first went there was no musical instrument at "t'chapil." Argy Verrill led the singing of the hymns. He stood in the aisle at the end of his pew, his right hand cupped round his right ear, which, he said, helped him "git t'pitch." A grunt issued from his mouth, low down in the register, and the blast would ascend in a swooping crescendo until it came to rest on a suitable note. Then everyone joined the singing in an almost rollicking way, the men stamping their feet to the time as they did in the public-houses on Saturday nights.

A year or two after we had been there, a harmonium was bought. There was some bother because no one could be found to play it properly. Argy resented its arrival and was determined not to lose his honourable position. On that first Sunday both Argy and the harmonium struck up. Part of the congregation sang in Argy's key and part in the key in which the harmonium was playing.

It was moving to hear them sing "For those in peril on the sea," as they did when a gale was blowing. I painted that subject and sent it to the R.O.I. It did not sell, was probably destroyed later, like most of my early work.

Souls were stripped bare at Love Feast time, all sense of reality lost in religious frenzy. Hysterical women confessed their sins. Men were "saaved" and would drink no more. A woman offered up a prayer for a certain man; she did not mention his name, but everyone knew whom she meant. Passing her in the street next day he shouted, "If you think, missus, that your praying is gwine t'send me t'Heaven, you're vastly mistaken." War raged perpetually between the public-houses and the chapels.

I came quite near to becoming religious while there. We stuck to the Ranters not only because most of our friends were Primitive Methodists, but also on account of a prejudice against the Congregational chapel, the rival place of worship.

The minister in charge there, about to be moved elsewhere, gave me a commission to paint a water-colour of the magnificent rostrum. I spent a week making an elaborate

copy of its varnished intricacies. Although he was pleased with the picture, he went away without paying the ten shillings he had offered me to do it.

Argy Verrill often took us out in his boat, teaching us to row with the heavy-ended oars that took all the skin off our knuckles before we knew how to cross them over properly. The men said they were going to put me in one of their races, but there never were any more races after that time.

Argy Verrill thought we might like to paint hauling up crab-pots at sea. We went, early one morning, after drinking tea that had been made the night before and left stewing on the hob.

The boat smelt of fish and everything we touched was wet; it was raining in a mean way. All was grey and cold, the sea was lippy, the coble danced about sickeningly as those endless strings of pots came on board. The crabs pinched our ankles if we were not careful, and that tea lay like a lump of lead on my stomach—I never saw a scene less inspiring to paint. I longed for the hours to pass when we could go back to shore. The breakfast-fire smoke soaring in white plumes from the chimneys made of the distant village the most desirable haven in the world.

Harold bought a leaky old pilot-boat for our own use. We nearly lost our lives several times; it was too round-bottomed to be safe for that coast. On one occasion we were changing seats and failed to notice we had let the boat drift into the swell that was perpetually over the reefs of Cawbor Steel—we heard shouts from the shore—she suddenly reared up on end—an awful green wall of water came towards us, but Harold pointed her straight at it just in time and we rode safely over before the wave broke.

There was another outing when we again landed among the breakers. Finally the fishermen, tiring of seeing us take risks, contrived to jam our boat behind their line of cobbles at the top of the beach.

Harold and I did a great deal of cliff-climbing when we first went to Staithes. We gave that up too, after having been caught on a shifting shale-bank with a precipice below. Three times Harold slid, spreadeagling to within a foot or two of the brink. It was terrible, clinging on to the steep slope with the tips of my fingers and toes and watching him go.

The cliffs were not safe to climb, rotting stone was always falling. One morning a loafer walking along the shore saw a long arm of jet sticking out of the cliff. He pulled out one of the largest pieces ever found, took the train to Whitby, and sold the jet for five hundred pounds. In the evening he went with some of his friends up to the top to point out where he found it and, being drunk, he overbalanced, fell over the cliff edge into the sea. Neither he nor his money in his pockets was ever found.

We heard many tales of this kind down at Argy Verrill's cottage when our day's work was over and it was too rough for the men to go to sea. Argy's kitchen was a regular *salon* at these times. Quite a crowd of us sat round the rag mat into which all the men spat their chew—watching the herring grilling for supper between a small pair of twisted tongs slung across the fire-front. All the oil ran out from the fish, leaving the flesh dry and sweet. Argy said it was the only way to cook herring. Red-haired Ellen, Argy's daughter, was there as well "fettling" their supper while she entertained us, and the black cat rubbed against everyone's legs in turn. The pot dogs stared out above our heads and the brass spittoons that were never used shone on the mantelpiece; Argy's face, whiskers and hair flamed in the lamplight as he sat in the corner by the stove farthest from the door.

Argy Theaker, quick, slender and handsome was always there; his greying dark moustache and beard grew straight. He had the reputation of being a fierce fellow. One night he told us of a steamboat that had steered through his nets tearing them adrift despite the riding lights—enraged, he

had pelted the man on the bridge of the vessel with red-hot cokes from his bogie fire without noticing the burns on his hands.

I remember another tale we were told in that cottage.

"I were a-gathering flithers for bait yar morning jest as it were coomin' leet. I were reet down at t'water's edge when I come across him. He were lying face down over a boulder just as if someone had flung him there—his hair was gold colour like yours, Miss Johnson. I thought he were breathing at first—anyway, he warn't real cold. I carried him home on me back; he were dead when we got there. He were buried oop at Hinderwell, but we couldna put a name on his grave. I think he were a Swede by the look on."

I started painting in spots of pure colour, the impressionists' method of giving light and atmosphere, but it never worked with me. As far as I know, not a single picture survived.

While my mind was still in confusion as to whether one should paint in spots or glazes, or this, that or the other way, I had the good fortune to meet Charles Mackie at a hockey match. The Brothchies at Hinderwell had made up a team and we used to play in a field behind their house near the edge of the cliff. They were wild games—never enough people to make the full number. After they were over, in Mrs. Brothchie's drawing-room the cups of tea she gave us seemed as little use in quenching our thirst as spitting on a red-hot iron.

Harold and I went up to visit Mr. and Mrs. Mackie at Mrs. Redmond's farm at Roxby on the moors. Afterwards, he came once every week to my studio in Staithes. He insisted that I should paint simply and directly and not try to evade difficulties by tricky use of paint.

Every week diagrams had to be ready for him, showing the effect of one colour on another. At first these were purely abstract works. Later, I was allowed to apply to

subject pictures the illusionary effect of one colour on another and try the balancing of a pale spread by one concentrated spot—all I did was coldly intellectual, but of such incalculable benefit that I never paint a picture now without thinking of what he taught me. I shall always be grateful for the time and trouble he spent, which lifted me out of a morass.

He told me, too, how to lay my palette—white on the left—then through the rainbow range—yellow—orange—scarlet—red—crimson—purple—blue—black—green. I still make use of his plan. Another tip he gave me was to use as few colours as possible, earth pigments for preference—now and again to omit one of the primaries, blue, yellow or red, and see how near it was possible to get to it by the play of a dominant note of its opponent colour, so that the spectator's eye, tiring of its strength should find the non-existent colour in a neutral grey—a possible illusion that holds greater beauty than gaudy paint, and a most fascinating game to play.

Even though I could not achieve much, through Mackie's influence an immense improvement became evident in my work and this developed rapidly.

The life around helped; one could not be lazy among such struggles. Each cottage held not only the strain of ordinary life, but the shadow of the North Sea, which dealt a living with one hand and death with the other. Existence there would have been unbearable if one had thought too much about it.

After a short absence we noticed an able-bodied fisherman sitting on his hunkers ashore instead of at sea like the rest. One day when this man and his nephew were coming back from their fishing the weather had turned "mucky." Not far from the shore his coble had run away on a breaker; if he had let her go, she would have landed on the rocks, and the two men would have had a chance of scrambling ashore in shallow water, but he would have for a certainty lost his coble. Being rather a near-fisted man, he had broached her and taken the risk of capsizing. The nephew

was thrown overboard. His uncle had made a grab for him in the water and just managed to catch a thumb; he could not hold on. The boy was lost. "Now, all the time he thinks that he's got that thumb in his hand!" He had finally to go to Middlesbrough Hospital; they said he had a clot of blood on the brain. In imagination he held that thumb in his hand till Death relaxed his grip. All at Staithes said he died of a broken heart.

I always took a sketch-book up into the field where the band played after t'chapil teas. We helped serve and cut bread and butter. Round the fishermen's necks were clean white scarves, the ends tucked into their guernseys. The women were almost strangers in skirts down to the ground and hats in the place of sunbonnets. Here and there were familiar garments. Beforehand, children had come to our door saying, "Mary Ann or Anna Margaret [or some name of that kind] wants one of your cotton frocks to wear at the Tea."

Up there near the station the Fair came every June. A great cleaning up took place beforehand. Houses were freshly whitewashed and painted and gaudy new wall-papers hung on the kitchen walls. For weeks women had been rushing to the bakehouse laden with tins of speckled dough; they came back trailing a rich smell. Sometimes as much as a whole pound would be spent on the ingredients of one of these big black sweet-cakes, too important to be cooked in the cottage ovens.

During that Fair week, everyone entertained their friends to tea-parties. An invitation was issued this way: "Mrs. Crooks says you have got to go to So-and-so's to tea this afternoon." When we arrived the table was spread with every delicacy for which Yorkshire is famous: jams, ginger-bread, spice-loaf, curd cakes and, in the centre, the black sweet-cake. We had to have some of each; the pile on our plates was crowned by an enormous slab of black cake containing in itself enough nourishment for a meal. The tea

was strong and thick with cream and sugar; at the bottom of the white cup a little shamrock pattern showed in gold outline.

We all wore our best clothes. Sweat poured down our faces as we ate; it was hot in the closed kitchen and the warmth of hospitality and good feeling radiated. The pot of musk in the window among the geraniums pitted its sweet scent against the odour of healthy bodies and the sickly smell of melting butter.

When everyone had eaten all they could, our host pushed back his chair with a scrape on the stone flags and, pulling down the front of his new guernsey, would exclaim with a beaming smile, "I'm that full I could feel the food with me finger if I put it in me mouth," or, "I'm that theet I could crack a flea on me belly!"

Fair time was holiday time for the whole year. All difficulties were put on one side, and even the poorest contrived to have their bit of black cake so they could entertain properly though they had pinched their bellies all the year to do it.

In our new home on the hill Sis and I colour-washed over the flowered wall-papers and repainted the woodwork. It was fun going to sales to pick up odd bits of furniture and old brass candlesticks for next to nothing; the auctioneer always called a chest of drawers a "pair" of drawers. Everything went in pairs; even your teeth, if you had proper new ones top and bottom, were called a "pair" of teeth. The gender of any big piece was feminine. Our piano became "she" as she was heaved up the steps of our cottage to the cry of "A-a-a-a-ah-ah." Our cottage was spoken of as "Where Miss Johnson and them live." It was three stories high, one of a row of three.

This red-brick structure, when buffeted by a gale, swung in an alarming way; in my top room it was impossible to sleep for the terrific noise—it was like being perched on a masthead at sea. I would lie awake until I could bear it

no longer, and then over the banisters the mattress and bedclothes were tossed to find a haven on the floor of our sitting-room downstairs.

I loved that bedroom, from which the coast-line could be seen. Captain Pinder, opposite, had a look-out on the ledge just outside his house, where he could go and sit with his telescope, scanning north, east and south. A white flag-pole was set there, up which he ran a Union Jack when any special event took place.

Captain Pinder was a stocky little retired sea-captain with a white pointed beard and an enormous voice, a teetotaller who could get intoxicated on excitement.

He was constantly re-whitewashing his cottage and re-varnishing the woodwork. Inside everything was shipshape. Pictures and models of vessels on painted seas hung all round in glass-cases. There was a bottle, too, with a carved ship inside, which only got there by miraculous intervention, all the masts were up and the sails set. And, as in every other cottage, there were several glass rolling-pins slung from a ribbon tied to their ends, on the sides of which were painted views of foreign parts, another ship or a motto.

Every evening Captain Pinder went down to the Fishermen's Institute, where the men played bagatelle on a warped board with warped cues in a room all obscured by "shag" smoke. Here Captain Pinder held court, his voice raised above all others. He was acknowledged by everyone to be "King o'Steers."

I used the big room above in the Institute building for a time until it was turned into a picture exhibition, to which we all sent our sketches. A handsome poster was hung at the street door and nearly all the visitors who passed paid their threepence to come in, and sometimes even bought a picture.

One exhibition that we held there before sending our works to the Royal Academy did not cover us with glory. Harold was away and so he was out of it. I will not mention the name of any other exhibitor beside myself. We sent

out invitations to the whole country to come to a really grand private view. We had a large reception and gave tea in the gallery. Unfortunately not a single one of those pictures was considered worthy to be hung at Burlington House.

To help the Fishermen's Institute, the visitors arranged at least one concert every summer. When the programme was finished it became a "free for all" concert. The audience would stay in their seats and shout for "Jarge." Jarge got up after proper delay to sing "Green Broom," about twenty verses—rather coarse at the end. It was hard to keep some of the young men off the platform, when they left their pubs to come and hear the finish.

One night we had a minstrel entertainment. All the performers blacked their faces and wore boaters and blazers. Frank Mason, the painter from Scarborough, was head man. The local curate, who announced the song Mason was to sing, considered it necessary to explain that the American name for a tramp was "bum."

There was an ominous silence, Mason started his song. I remember two lines of it:

Rusty bums and jolly old chums,
To hell with the man that works!

The audience shouted itself hoarse with delight. The song was the sensation!—its real meaning entirely lost in spite of the curate's explanation.

The Boer War was fought and won while we were in Staithes. It was feared that Captain Pinder might lose his reason, he got so worked up if things went wrong for England, or news of our victories came.

When Mafeking and Ladysmith were in turn relieved, Captain Pinder organised celebrations and became king indeed; he was crowned publicly and set on a throne lashed on to a lorry. Round him were his courtiers, dressed in a medley of colours: drawers had been ransacked for

anything out of the common; among them was a magnificently embroidered coat, brought home by a sailor many years before from what country no one knew.

Bunting filled the streets. The lorry was garlanded with paper flowers. Captain Pinder waved a Union Jack instead of a sceptre.

Most of the men's voices were hoarse with drink before they started the war-songs of the moment, the words of one of which ran:

Dundonald's gone to Ladysmith
And Kronje is in jail;
Kruger's got his whiskers cut,
His tears would fill a pail.

The noise of the shouting, the singing, the drum-beating and the tin trumpets became more and more violent as the cortège drove round the countryside, stopping at every public-house. We followed the party as far as Runswick, where Harold insisted on our going back as they were getting too rough.

After the Ladysmith celebration we heard that only one of the lorry's crew had been speechless on his return. It was Captain Pinder who had drunk nothing but water—in such a state he had to be lifted off the lorry and put to bed in an almost unconscious condition.

CHAPTER VI

WHITE WATER

STAITHES had been a Danish settlement some two or three hundred years before, they said.

Practically everyone had Porritt, Laverick, Verrill, Unthank, Longster or Theaker for a surname. It was only a short while since no marriage outside their own village was allowed; a few years earlier, any strange man coming to court a girl was stoned out of the place. There was more than a touch of the Viking in some of the men's looks. When Isaac Unthank strode down the street, his metal-shod sea-boots clicking on the cobbles, everyone had to turn to look. He stood six feet three inches in his socks, his shoulders spread in proportion; his nose was the beak of a hawk, and the leonine aspect of his head and carriage was emphasised by reddish hair and beard.

That race of fisher-people bore no resemblance to any other on the east coast. "They're all savages," people from other parts would say. The hardships they bore may have had its influence, for from north to south of the coast there was no such dangerous harbourage, calling for such desperate courage.

Tragedy was stamped on the women's faces. Among many magnificent people, one woman stood out. She was tall and straight, an unseeing look in her dark eyes, her neck a white column. We all wanted to paint her.

One day an offshore gale blew. The horizon line was lumpy and white caps showed all over the grey water; in the "lew" of the shore you could not feel a breath. I had finished my day's work and was turning round the corner from my studio behind a public-house in the main street when I almost ran into her—stalking along, swinging

her arms and violently shrieking, "I tell tha, he'll coom back . . . !"

All the fishermen had decided it as too "wildified" that day to "put off." Suddenly this woman's husband and his mate had appeared with their gear and launched their coble—a signal for every other boat to "put off" as well. Everyone had come back safely but the first to leave. No one had seen the boat go down, but all hope was abandoned.

For weeks this poor creature was to be seen standing scanning the water from the top of Cawbor Nab looking for the coble. She forgot her bairns and her hunger; it was even difficult to get her home at night.

Within the year, she was married to another man who had to have a wife to help him with his gear; she needed a husband to earn food for her children. Once more she was to be seen carrying, hauling, knitting on beach, quay and rocks, remote and mysterious as before.

One of the kindest and jolliest women there was Mrs. George Porritt; her face shone with good nature and the heat from her bright kitchen stove. We were always welcome in that kitchen; both she and George had hearts as big as buckets. If she saw us in the street she shouted, "Come along, I've got a crab or two for you." In the boiling-shed, stacks of them were cooling off ready to be packed for market in Middlesbrough.

George was a great favourite with everybody. Mrs. Porritt did not lose her temper even when he came home late from the "Cod and Lobster." She would say, "Jarge, tho's all stackery," and Jarge would reply, "I'se not stackery!"

Mrs. Porritt told us of a ship that had come ashore laden with coal. To get her off the cargo had been thrown overboard. Defying the coastguard, everyone had gathered enough fuel for the year. The Porritts filled everything they possessed, and even stacked it under their bed. She told us tales too of the old days and how people took lanterns along the coast, "wrecking."

Mrs. Porritt was one to be called in to a sick-bed or to lay out the dead. While we were there, one of two sisters died who had not spoken to each other for twenty years or more. Mrs. Porritt had just washed the corpse when the surviving sister came in to bid it good-bye. I remember Mrs. Porritt's words when she described the scene to us. "First of all she started slapping its face. I let her go on for a bit, but when she started pulling her all about the room and braying her at the same time, I thought it were time for her to stop."

Susie, one of the sisters, was an awful-looking old woman with red eyelids and a yellow face. She drank laudanum and was a suet-eater, they said. They called her "Aud Laudny."

The butcher had to put his suet-dish behind the counter, or the women were always pinching it and hiding it under their aprons—a peculiar taste for eating it appeared to go with the craving for laudanum.

The Dog Lope, a passage you had to walk through sideways if you were wide or fat, led into Gun Gutter, so called because it was just wide enough to shoot a gun down. A trickle of water ran down the centre of it from the hill behind. Church Street piled up one rock side and the Porritt's cottage, among others, was set on the other side. Opposite was the back of Bobbie Atkinson's pub; in the yard, rows of salted black jack hung drying in the sun, grey-white kite shapes against the brown stones.

At the Porritts' Harold, Mayor and Arthur Friedenson lodged. I received my first commission through Arthur Friedenson, who did not want to do it himself. Here is part of the letter he gave me, telling what was wanted: "A design for a show-card—a bloody sun must be shining on a bloody sea, on which these letters are to lie in perspective, 'The sun never sets on Hawkes's Band Instruments'."

I tried for three weeks to make a design from this motif that had artistic merit. Then, throwing Art to the winds,

I did exactly what they had asked for to their complete satisfaction. I needed their three guineas.

We were considered brave because we did not mind being out in the dark. Nothing would induce the fisher-people to go inland at night. They were afraid of ghosts. Certainly some parts were eerie, particularly Baulby Head, the highest cliff in England.

Sally Hicks the fish-buyer, Mrs. Porritt's friend, was big, red-faced and as strong as a man. She always drove her cart at a furious pace, standing straddle-legged and balancing it as it rattled and bumped over the cobbles.

One night Sally was driving home along the cliff road with the money from the sale of her fish in her pocket. Suddenly two men sprang out of the hedge, one seizing the horse's head and one hanging on the tail of the cart. Sally had the whip in her hand and with it slashed the man off in front, then she dived back at the other with her fish-gutting knife, and drove on as fast as she could lick.

When she went to clean her cart in the morning she found four fingers lying inside.

Sally Hicks and Mrs. Porritt were friends. Sometimes they went together to Middlesbrough to enjoy themselves. Tired one day, they sat down in a public park. Mrs. Porritt: "An' you'd 'ardlins believe it, a man coom up an' had the cheek to ask us to pay a penny for our seats. 'Pay a penny for sittin' doon, I'll dae nae sich thing,' I said. But Sally she just put her hand in her pocket and pulled oot her purse—she's a grand spender when she's oot."

The first time I saw primroses growing in mad profusion was in a valley called Pearly Bottoms. During spring we often went to pick the flowers to send to our friends in town.

Sheltered there, one learnt that the long winter was nearly over, in some patches of sunlight between the tracery of pale shadow it was almost warm. No one could take a step

without crushing the virginal green and yellow that was springing from the black earth.

These expeditions brought a desire to paint landscape and I went there many times, hoping to make studies for a great work. I had, too, a longing to imitate the notes of the birds singing their new songs in the tree-tops.

When you are young, one bright day of spring and there can be no more frost or rain. But the patches of sunlight were soon covered with shadow and the cold damp penetrated to my bones.

There was going to be everything I knew of spring in that big picture. I planned to study some new-born lambs in a field near Hinderswell; after waiting weeks for a fine day, at last I went there in desperation to make drawings, despite the grey day and a strong east wind. I would not give up, but sat on till I had finished. I never knew how I got the circulation back into my legs nor how I crawled out of that field into shelter to beat myself to life again.

All I learned then was the origin of a work called "Spring" painted in Cornwall years later.

We were warned to discontinue our wanderings. One of the semi-idiots of the village, a big, powerful fellow, had taken to roving around the countryside. Rosie, Sis and I were walking along the Cliff Road, admiring the light of the moon over the water, when we turned and saw a crouching figure running after us in the hedge shadow. We were chased all the way to the miners' cottages at the top of Cawbor. Rosie did not get over the fright for a long time; she dared not look at moonlight—it made her tremble all over and feel sick.

We were never afraid of "pore Tom" who lived in Church Street. He was his mother's handyman, in spite of one paralysed arm and one dragging leg.

Pore Tom could not talk, a grunt and a pleasant grin, which showed fangs like an ape, were all he was capable of in answer to "Hello, Tom!"

One day we saw him at the bottom of the street where

he had been sent to empty a large iron saucepan down the drain. While we watched, his father, just landed, gave him his oilers to take home. Suddenly Tom caught sight of his little brother who was wanted at home. Equal to the emergency, Tom tucked the oilers under his useless arm, put the saucepan on his head like a hat, and seized his brother with his free hand which was strong and big. An uproar of laughter came from every cottage door as he went up the street. Everyone rushed out to look at the black grease streaming down his face. "He's that sensible is pore Tom," everyone always said of him.

I sold a picture for four pounds to a man from Manchester. The subject was a dark-eyed, half-witted girl, with sea and sky for a background. She had a bad cold while she was posing and did not have a handkerchief, and I was shy of offering her mine, so the sittings were distressing; it was impossible to see the modelling of her upper lip, until she sniffed, then it would be gradually hidden again. The man bought the picture because he thought she was such a beautiful girl.

I painted her sitting on a seat on a ledge half-way up the cliff behind the houses, back of the Staithe. There were two posts set on this ledge, on which lamps were hung at night. When the boats came home in the dark they had only to keep them in sight one above the other, as they rowed in a safe channel, clear of the sunken reefs on either side.

There was romance in those lights that guided the men home, till you saw the old gentleman who tended t'lamps. He wore grey whiskers like a fringe of monkey-fur trimming all round his clean-shaven unwashed face. His nose was excessively long and pointed, his eyes were sore. He had no sense of the sacredness of his duty. It was "joost a cold, weary, moocky job!" He tended t'Chapil lamps as well, where he had to get on to chairs to reach the wall bracket-lamps. "Joomping oop and joomping down, what's life?

It's a weary job!" he grumbled over and over again till the repetition died to a growl. One day I was painting him baiting lines when a hook caught his finger. "They're reelins called earks [hooks] cos they dis eark yer," he said, sucking it.

Baiting lines was work that had to be done carefully. The coils of the long line must be straight and the attached cords that ended in hooks must hang down in a perfect tassel; otherwise when the line was shot from a boat under sail there might be a tangle causing a hook to fly up and catch anywhere. Many an emergency operation was performed in a deckless, cabinless coble; there was no pulling the barbed end through, it had to be cut out. Many men's faces bore traces of such accidents in the shape of a little black hole; before I knew their cause I had often watched them, fascinated and mystified.

As long as I can remember I had wanted to run wild in a broader life, away from factories, miles from houses in rows, dressed-up shops and the gentility of town, where no one knows what their neighbour enjoys or endures.

Here in Staithes we share each other's joys and sorrows—we drink our glass of rum at a morning wedding where the girl is already big and the man half tight—we go to see the new-born baby—we take our turns at a bedside—I am even asked to serve at a funeral. What greater sign of confidence? I sit on a gilded horse on the roundabouts at the Fair with a fisherman for companion, and we pay our pennies turn and turn about. I learn the pieces for that game of life, of which each household is a pawn!

In the lane this evening is a perfect picture of bliss in prospect, as on the shoulder of her husband-to-be a girl lays her head. No one would guess from that idyll that she scarce two months back had been seeking adventure in the glare of cities. She had worn silks and high-heeled shoes. What contrast to her thick ironshod boots, working dress and her own dark alleyway at home. Do not blame her,

but forgive her as her old lover has done. She too needed the colour others sought in the laudanum bottle, or the pub, or found in the spiritual ecstasy of the Love Feast. Her lover has forgotten all—she is only twenty-two, as beautiful a creature as God ever made. Her face has lost its childish look. Now time has come for life in earnest; she must bear her yearly brat, sweep, scrub, make bread; she must toil among the heavy gear and scrape up with frozen fingers, and carry her loads of bait before dawn, come rain, hail, wind or snow. Each day she will bid her husband good-bye, not knowing whether she will ever see him again.

I too learnt the black and white of life—that neither was to be despised—without one the other could not be. Here was an open book where the characters lived, played their passion of toil, hate, ecstasy and death. You only had to look—every day a page turned.

I would make my own book so that the whole world could read; on canvas and in paint I would tell of what I had seen. Fuel was added to the flame of ambition, making it blaze. In a rage of impotence I tortured myself with the thought, “Why have not I the power to do it now?” And while all was so bright and fresh, in my secret heart I longed for the gift of words and the imagination of an author to tell of those things which only words can tell.

I was happy there in Staithes in a way I did not know was possible. Wherever we had lived before, difficulties had existed for other than studio work. Staithes was used to painters, people were used to posing if they had time and you had money to pay for it. Even if you could not afford a model you only had to set your painting-things up outside—you would be sure to see something to do. You need not even take your easel back to your studio when you finished, but could leave it, as I did, out on the quay for days—nobody would touch it.

I remember seeing a picture that Fred Mayor had started in the early morning left standing till nightfall, untouched even by the children. We were expected to work as the

fisher-people did themselves, though they did say, "It's a nice pastime for you!"

No people crowded round to look, they were much too busy on their own account. In the length and breadth of England I doubt if a painter could have found a better place.

Work continued to develop; a time came when other painters began to take an interest in it. Mackie had shown me that there were no short-cuts to making a work of art, and that other people's manners when imitated only turned to empty mannerisms.

Every day's work became a voyage of discovery. I found out for myself that all shadows in sunlight are not blue, but sometimes warmer than the light itself; that they only looked blue when turned to the sky. I first realised this colour law while painting a girl in a pink frock in full sunlight. The shadow on the folds looked rosier than I could match with paint.

Another discovery was made: a child was not a grown-up person in miniature; it had its own proportions, poses and gestures.

In summer my days were spent on the beach, rocks or quay: wherever children were playing I made innumerable colour notes and drawings. One day I executed thirteen small water-colours. Several were sold later for a pound or two each. My studio was littered with studies of every kind of action a child could take. The girls "splogged" in and out of the water all day, often in a single cotton garment that clung closely.

"T'bairns is niver dry all summer; they gangs t'bed wet, and they gits oop wet," the mothers said.

On the distant scaws the bathing boys looked like pink maggots; unfortunately they would never come close enough for me to draw them, besides it was nearly always too cold to pose. They were in the water every chance they got, in spite of their fathers' warnings, "Niver larn t'swim; it only taks you longer to droon."

I retain an impression of a particular girl standing, her

bare feet clinging to a rounded stone in a rock-pool. I have often tried to re-live the rapture of my first realisation of the emotional power of beautifully balanced line, her heritage from generations of head bearers. Her dress was wind-whipped close round her body like a Tanagra figureen.

It was on that battered wooden barrier, on those slabs of wet stone, it was on that strip of shingle where the sea cast up its refuse of wreck, seaweed, fossil or jewel of cornelian that shone with a red, winking eye among the pebbles; it was among the grey-white boulders of the south end of that beach and on the smooth brown spaces flattened by the wash of the sea that I first saw truly in my own way. Here was no tale to tell; there was beauty in very simple things if one had eyes to see it, even in a lot of dirty snivelling bairns on a sordid stony beach that was a dump for the refuse of the town and the fish-guts. To me it was more wonderful than anything, because I imagined I could see it in my own way.

Everything held absorbing interest, from the baby sucking its linen bag full of sugar, or dummy teat, to the stripped fourteen-year-old boy. Interest grew with the years spent there, culminating in a series of pictures actually painted during my first years in Newlyn, but in which I endeavoured to make use of my study and experience at Staithes.

These big pictures and the numerous small ones of a similar type, although executed in Newlyn, were derived from Staithes.

I made a special study of children at that time in Staithes, partly because a very few coppers would satisfy my models. Even those few coppers strained resources to the utmost. A strike was imminent at one time when I had only half-pennies to offer. I remember a child shouting out as she ran along the Staithe, "I've been sitting for an hour for that woman and all she gave me's an 'apenny." I was covered with shame, but it was all I had.

Sometimes when several bairns were posing I forgot to tell those I had finished with to go. One day I was wakened

to realisation of my cruelty by a voice shrieking, "Mary Ann, come over here. Meggie Verrill's backside's clagged to t'sand." She had sat so long she could not get up.

The first time I heard the word "b——r" used by anyone was when a bairn too young to walk was crawling on a doorstep. In answer to its mother, who was telling it to come in, it turned round and said, "Tho' b——r." "Come tha ways 'eam tho moocky little swine, or I'll gut thea," a mother would call. A gutting-knife was a familiar weapon in women's hands for they and the old men did all the work ashore. The terrible threat never had effect on the child, for both mothers and fathers alike adored their offspring. It was as much as your life was worth to cross any child.

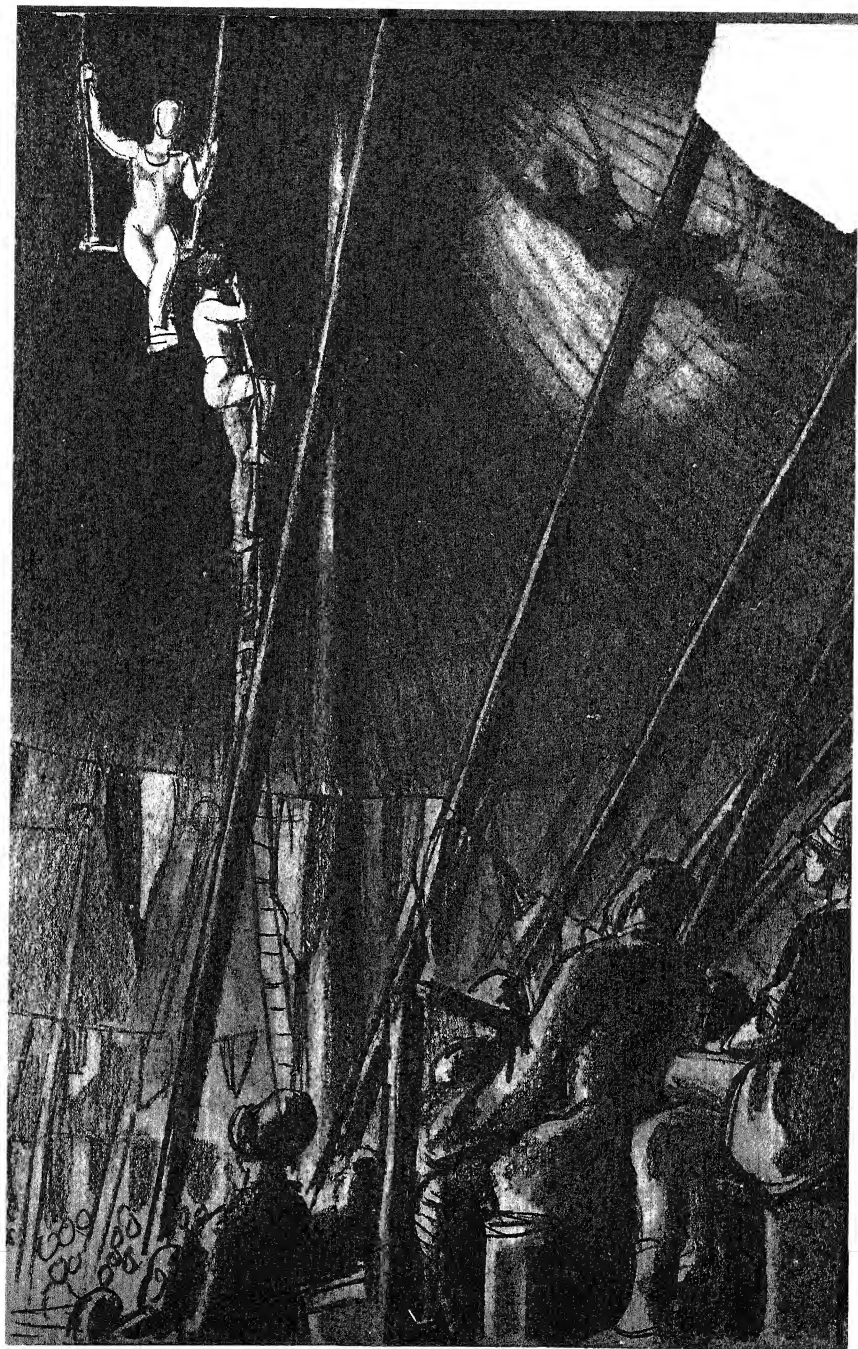
It was women's work to carry the nets up to the top of the cliff to dry on the grass; a fine subject they made spreading them out on the wind-blown brownish turf.

One day Rosie and I were at the bottom of Church Street. Two sisters, both over eighty, were waiting for men to lift the skips to hold the wet nets on their heads. They both stood, arms akimbo, the straw-filled ring that fitted the head to protect it slung round their wrists. It seemed shameful to allow them to carry such weights while we were young and strong. At our request the nets were put on our heads instead, but we were rooted to the ground and could not take a step forward, even on the level.

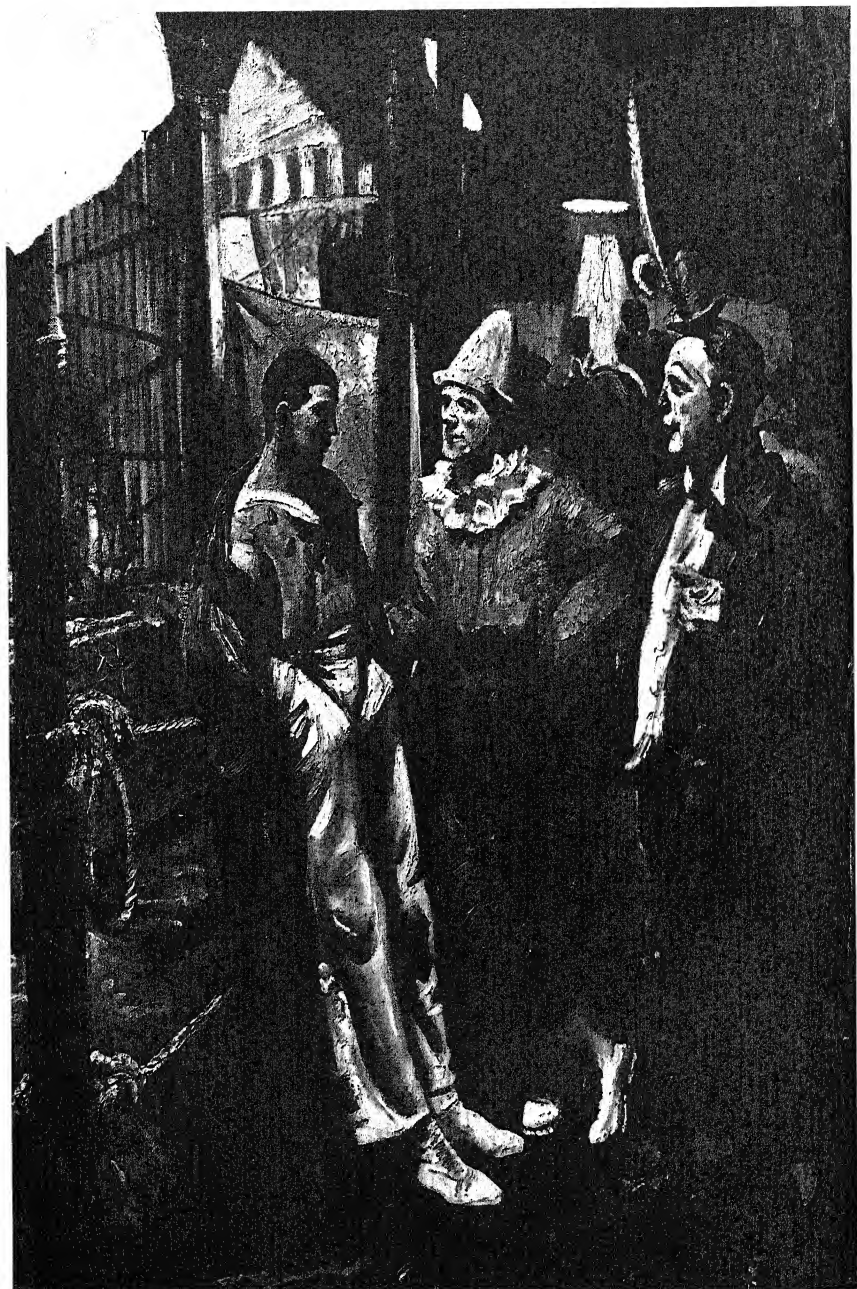
From the back the old ladies looked like girls, as, cackling with laughter, they went up the steep hill thinking nothing of the weight they were carrying, which had taken the combined efforts of two men to lift.

I have already mentioned Frankie Seymour's shop. There was scarcely anything you could not buy there, from cheese to a wedding dress, paraffin or rusty tin-tacks.

Mrs. Seymour was short and fat. Mr. Seymour was tall and thin; you never knew which of his eyes was looking at you. He always wore a straw hat on his head while serving



TRAPEZISTS 1930



CLOWN AND ACROBAT

1930

in the shop, in his shirt-sleeves and white apron. As he stood to talk, he put his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat. When he smiled—he often did, he was a fascinating man—he showed the handsomest and biggest set of false teeth that was ever made. Unfortunately the upper ones always left the gum when he talked, the complete set lying on his lower jaw and the gape of his mouth showing above all.

His shop was generally full of customers. You often went there just to have a chat, or to buy a reel of coarse cotton or a packet of pins that were like hedge-stakes, and came away with a lot of goods you had never thought of buying and did not really want. There was no resisting Frankie's charm and his enthusiasm for his wares. Against your better judgment he could persuade you that a length of shoddy was the finest cloth in the world, he had such a way of feeling it between thumb and finger. As for bacon, he could convince you that the most indifferent piece of reesty stuff would make a delicious breakfast, his eyes rolled in independent directions, his teeth clicked as he licked his lips and said, "Isn't that a grand piece? Me and the Missus cut some off to have with our tea this morning, and, oh! t'dip on't!" "Dip" meant dripping. Frankie had the same passionate ardour in the pursuit of anything—no gossip passed him by. We could always hear the "latest" in his shop.

He retired after making a nice fortune. The last time I saw him was in the Hinderwell Lane. Both he and the Missus were dressed in their blacks, across his front was a big gold watch-chain, the Missus had hers hanging round her neck. A bowler had replaced the straw, his wife had a toque with a little ostrich plume in it. While Frankie stood talking he put his thumbs in the arm-holes of his waistcoat as of old, murmuring in an enchanted way, "Oh! and t'dip on't!" as he referred to the whole side of a pig they had bought for their own consumption.

Another shop was the hairdresser's. Paraffin and china

were sold where the fishermen also went to have their hair cut and be shaved in a rough-and-ready fashion. As Frankie's shop was clean, so this one was dirty: the floor was never scrubbed nor the pots dusted. You had only to pass the door to smell the unpleasantness inside. I had to learn how to cut Harold's hair—a quarrelsome business until I became skilful with practice. It was a long way to go to Whitby—expensive to have a hair-cut.

A good subject to paint, and one I often tried, was mending nets. The man or woman doing this work stayed pretty still for a long time and the action was repeated over and over again. The wooden needle flicked in and out of the strands, the knife held between finger and thumb cut off the ends of the new white cord that was filling the holes in the musky smelling mass of film, hung from a hook by a doorway. "Fettling t'nets" it was called.

The appearance of nets from their store in the lofts heralded the phenomenon of the passing of herring shoal on their mysterious journey from the north down the east coast, round the south, to disappear near the Bristol Channel, and reappear next year up north.

Great preparations are afoot. All is set agoing. Big catches may be made—money can be put by for the whole year. "Billy Fanny is quite a rich man," they say. "He has money in the bank. He is always the lucky one. Last year he got thirty 'last' one night and he got a good price for them too at Middlesbrough."

The boats come back, some have cleared the nets at sea—perhaps one coble had too big a catch. Here she comes riding the calm August water in a soggy way; the sea is like glass, there is scarcely a breath of wind, her mainsail is up, but it hangs slack, she is being rowed in. She comes up the Beckmouth in the early morning to moorings by the bridge, for it is high water now and will be high water again by the time they put off to-night.

Two fishermen stand on either side of the middle of the

boat, paying out a net from one compartment to another, shaking out the fish that slither and twist as they flow into the basket. The net is full of them, trapped by gills and fins, still breathing—silver streaks in the blackish purple meshes. Sou'-westers, oilers, jerseys, faces, beard, hair and hands are covered with scales that catch the light like sequins on a woman's evening-gown.

At high tide, landing was easier in the Beckmouth, when the cobbles would be moored to two wooden posts set for the purpose or to the supports of the old trestle bridge, a mischief not supposed to be done; the friction of the rope wore the oak in waists as the boats pulled and slackened in the moving water.

That old trestle bridge was an inspiration to every painter who came. Sydney Lee, whom we never knew when he was staying at a cottage up the valley, made a colour print of it. Harold painted what I thought a beautiful picture of it, a study to keep for his own use. Unfortunately, on one of our journeys, this picture was stolen from a train.

The bridge was a graceful structure—slender and strong. Its trestle supports formed a pedestal to the stretch of footway and rail. A fine composition it made, when of an evening in the herring season a crowd of people carrying their gear came teeming across on their way to the boats, all outlined against the sky. It is a pity that that aspect of it was never painted. It can never be done, for the old bridge was pulled down on account of the men tying their cobbles to it. Quarrels were always going on about the necessary repairs. A hideous iron girder bridge was put up in its place, which cost more yearly in fresh red paint than the old bridge had in new wood and everybody was satisfied, but to us the place was never the same after it had gone. Iron mines opened in the neighbourhood and, even before we left, many of the young men on starting life in earnest preferred the mine's certain wages to fishing's gamble.

The subject of my first really big picture was of the rush of people and boats down the beach—"Off to the Herring

Fishing." I should like to have the doing of it now, for at that time it was beyond my powers; I had no funds to pay for models for the life-size figures; they had to be carried out from pencil notes and memory. It was painted afresh each year for three or four years and each year it was sent to the Academy; each year it came back unhung. I believe it had merit the last time it was sent—perhaps the Academy was sick of seeing it! Finally I cut it up to make a roaring fire in my studio stove.

Even though my studio was so often warmed by burning canvases and drawings, I do not regret all the experimental work done and destroyed. Staithes was too big a subject for an immature student, but working there I developed a visual memory which has stood me in good stead ever since.

We watch the herring boats go out one fine evening. After supper we go down to Mrs. Porritt's kitchen for a talk. While we are sitting there we hear a rising wind outside blustering up Gun Gutter—a woman comes in and tells us, "They say it's gettin' wildified and the sea's gettin' oop."

"The'll be coomin' in soon," they say, as lanterns are lit and shawls wound round head and shoulders. Mrs. Porritt pokes the fire to brighten the blaze, puffs of smoke come out filling the kitchen with sulphurous fumes that can be tasted as well as smelt.

We all troop down to the beach, dotted with swinging lights that spray alternatively shadow and beam—illuminating for a second some human detail that immediately dissolves in chaotic darkness. Solid forms bump and disappear, scraps of shouted sentences are heard and lost. It is high tide; the beach trembles under the weight of the surf, dimly seen as it thunders down in powdering whiteness. In its midst we suddenly see the black silhouette of a boat almost standing on its stern, swishing in on the seething run of water. Cries come from farther and farther along

where more and more are landing. We hear, but cannot see. By the small hours all cobbles expected back are landed and made snug. Now a full gale is blowing—an equinoctial gale. We girls, wet through and cold, have gone home to bed.

Harold and Bagshawe, another painter, had stayed till the last, helping pull up. They were the last to leave the beach, and as they turned to go Harold thought they saw a light over Cawbor Steel, it seemed to swoop down and disappear. "I thought I saw a light, too," Bagshawe said. They watched a while and decided they must have been mistaken.

It was towards the close of a good herring season. The morning before many of the cobbles had gone "gunal" deep to Middlesbrough to sell their catch. Some got through their work there early, in time to get off for another night's fishing. When they had left Middlesbrough, there were still three boats unloading; the Unthanks' boat was the last. No one thought they would do otherwise than stay the night in the town, for it would be too late before they finished to do anything that night.

The crew of the Unthanks' boat consisted of father and two sons. They were always unlucky; they had not had a good catch until this one for long enough. But it seemed their luck had changed, before the other boats had left, their fish had been auctioned for thirty pounds.

Next morning, just when the day is breaking, I wake in a fright. A piercing shriek sounds outside. Terrified, I rush to the window and see a woman walking down the street waving her arms, screaming, pausing to take breath, and screaming again in long drawn-out notes that swoop down at the end. The Death Wail. Disaster is announced to the sleeping village. I call to ask "What is the matter?" She takes no notice and goes striding on.

I wake the others. We dress hurriedly and put our oilers over all. Out of doors it is all we can do to fight our way against the wind; we have to turn and go backwards when unable to face it any more. We come into view of

the water—"White water"—broken from shore to horizon. In the midst of a flother of foam, over the sunken reefs of Cawbor Steel, we see a black lump, never there before. The lump is nets, and round it bladders bob like heads.

"There's holes and deep channels doon under Pot-a-Boiling; maybe the rest o' t'gear is there drawn under, an' the bodies, maybe they'll wash oop later on."

That bit of water over Cawbor Steel was known as Pot-a-Boiling.

"It's the Unthanks; they didn't keep oot far eneaf for turning to coom in . . . !"

Tide is half-way down. A crowd of people makes its way along the shore to the north'ard. We join in the struggle and find it hard to keep our feet. A wall of wind hits and holds, then is released suddenly, when we take a few steps with surprising ease only to be blown back again. Every yard of the way contains a relic of the contents of that small boat—half an oar, a piece of torn net, a battered bucket. I pick up a broken thole-pin; the initials burnt on it are I. U. I put it in my pocket as a memento.

We at last reach Sandy Wyke, about half a mile up the coast, where, on a stretch of washed sand, we see a knot of people standing round a coble upright on her keel, staunch, sound and unscratched as if she had just come from the ship-building yard, the outside and inside of her clean as if newly scrubbed, entirely stripped of all her gear and completely empty. I had never seen a boat with nothing in or on it before, entirely cleared of all trappings—perfect—a skeleton from which all breath of life had been torn.

The day was still young, we could not work, but only wait and talk in whispers.

Midday, Harold and I, looking through his window on the Staithe, see a slow procession coming over the distant scaws. About a hundred men are bunched together; in the middle is a long ladder borne horizontally. In the centre of it, a body lies lashed, an effigy on a tomb—the remains of the father who had "washed in" higher up the coast.

They said, "He was killed as well as droonded! There is a big bruise on his head; he must have been lowering the mast when the coble capsized."

Hours seem to pass while we watch. They come slowly over the bare, flat rocks exposed at low tide. Behind them the sea is still "white water" and overhead torn jaggedness races torn jaggedness in the sky. The nets and bladders still heave and bob and the mast has come up to join their dance. To one side Red Cawbor Nab rears, grass-topped and shaggy with the wild yellow wallflower that had blossomed in spring. At its base a row of green and grey posts stick up like vertebrae, the sole remains of an old jetty.

Round the foot of the cliff up the lifeboat slipway, up the Beck side the ladder is borne. It halts before the ironstone cottage with the green shutters, just by the old bridge. The body is unlashed and carried into the parlour.

Inside a cloth is all ready laid on the table, on it teacups and saucers are set for a wedding feast; an adopted daughter was to have married the eldest son that day, and that was the reason for such haste to get home the night before. The boat has gambled and lost.

The bearers take no heed of the crockery, they push it on one side; some falls to the floor. They pull off the white table-cloth for a pall, to cover all that is left to the daughter, and to the wife-to-be. Hope has gone, all happiness, even bread. The capsizing of that coble has stripped that house of father and both sons.

The two girls are demented. "They wean't gag t'bed till t'ithers wash oop," we are told.

A hush is over the village. The bairns are kept in the houses, as the gale wears itself out. No one is in the streets. The timber of the quay is sodden and scoured of all its dirt; along it, the men do not pace up and down in pairs as usually when ashore. The whole village has withdrawn to mourn behind closed doors.

The big lame carpenter whose feet were frozen on a ship

is making the coffin, his shop is close by the Unthanks, "Reet handy," they say.

We all go to the funeral. All people who can stand on their feet gather on the footway. By the head of the trestle bridge are white-faced old people we have never seen out before. Old men's black pilot-cloth coats hang loose over their guernseys as they lean on someone's arm. Here is a beaver hat that must be a hundred years old. A great concourse; we never knew there were so many people in Staithes.

In the sky, clouds like bolsters are set tier above tier on the blue. The sea is indigo; a few breakers lazily turn over their whiteness. The sunlight is a hard yellow, the shadows dark—colourless.

Dressed in black with white shawls and black sashes tied across their breasts, the women take round trays with glasses of wine and little cakes.

Everyone wonders where they got the white flowers, when a wreath is seen lying on the coffin. It comes out to be placed on three poles for six men to grasp. In this way the body is borne through the town, up the hill, past the station and along the Hinderwell Lane to the churchyard. The chief mourners walk behind, black-edged handkerchiefs up to their faces. The following crowd sings hymns all the way.

The fact that the boys have not yet "come in" and cannot, like their father, be put into holy ground, aggravates the mourning. The expectancy is horrible.

On our return to Mrs. Crooks's we find she has come back ahead of us to light our fire; it is burning brightly, the cloth and crocks are spread, the kettle is boiling—all is ready for tea.

"There was a grand comp'ny at t'funeral!" Mrs. Crooks exclaims, proud that it had all gone off so well.

All is not over for the girls. There are the other bodies to wait for! For three weeks they neither go to bed nor take off their clothes, but just sit in the kitchen wailing and

belching in turns. "Get t'grief oop off your stomach, honey!" say their women friends, who stay with them day and night.

Three months later it is whispered that a leg has been found and that the initials on the stocking show it to belong to one of the boys. The men who found it decided to bury it at the foot of the cliff, right away from where the sea could get it again, and not tell the "gels" anything about it.

One day "Aud Margaret Ann Verrill, her who Harrington Mann and them lodges with when the coom, gits herself hist." Everyone knows she is up to some mischief when they see her dressed up like that. She is a dark-eyed, very beautiful old woman, but a cat. Down the main street she goes and across the bridge. No one dare stop her. Her destination is the Unthanks' cottage. Being related, as they all are, she does not stop to knock on the kitchen door, but bursts it open "skriking":

"Think sham o' th' sells to let that pore limb be shoved i' t'earth and no Christian burial," was the way she broke the news.

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CHAPTER VII

"AUD JARGE"

ONE year while Harold's sister Ethel was staying with Sis and me, we were filled with a longing for the stretches of heather on the moors. Mrs. Bowman at Roxby said she would "do for us" for a trifling sum if we did not want too much looking after. She had all the boys to feed, the milking, the dairy and the chickens.

We started, two of us carrying our trunk by the handles on either side. It was heavy, filled with paints and all our things. Before we had gone a few yards we put it down to wonder how we were going to carry it up the hill, when a fisherwoman coming along exclaimed:

"Put it on your head; yer must carry it that way—it'll pull yer airms oot o' t'sockets!"

She twisted our handkerchiefs into a ring as a padding, the box was lifted on to my head, where it stayed till we got to the top, nearly three miles away.

The farm was right at the edge of the moor. Through the arches of the wind-swept trees round the stack-yard we saw the country we had walked through—stretched out, the high horizon of fields, farms, lanes—up and down, and the sea beyond—not unlike a Corot composition.

We slept all three together in a maple-wood bed with white dimity curtains that, like the linen, smelt of hay and sun. In our sitting-room was a piano, with pleated rose silk and fretwork frontage. "It maun be a good yan," Mrs. Bowman said. "We've had it twenty years and it hasn't wanted tuning yet."

All the cooking for the big family and lodgers had to be done over the old-fashioned open fire in the kitchen; we saw a whole tree dragged in once when the lads were out

and she was short of logs—it went right out through the door, the other end alight. Never was slave driven so hard, she carried the household on her bent back. “Mother, mother,” we would hear shouted constantly from all quarters.

When we three girls went there we had reckoned on gathering blackberries to eke out our meals. Only once did we find an abundance, in a meadow near a farm on the moor. We were filling our baskets when a man with a savage dog came to drive us out, calling us “a riving crew.” We lost our taste for blackberries to eat with Mrs. Bowman’s thick cream.

The last house, before all cultivation was lost in the wild, was the inn at the top of the hill. Two rooms, one on top of another, comprised the building. Many families had been born under that steep thatched roof. The bare comfort of the wooden settle in the combined kitchen, bar and living-room had an attraction for the men of the district. There, for one brief spell, they could forget their days of loneliness and servitude to the soil that took so much and gave so little in return.

At closing time a noisy group would stumble down the hill. “What statesmen we could be, what posts we could uphold with dignity, were we given a chance!”

Behind the door at home, as a heavy footstep is heard on the step, a whisper might be heard:

“Hush, bairns, yer faither’s bin oop t’ ’ill agen!”

One of these husbands on his return always shot his gun to tell his wife to come down and “mak a cup o’ tea.” One night he shot through the bedroom floor, because she did not come down quick enough.

Another man, a farm labourer, allowed only two-and-six a week to his wife for housekeeping out of his wage of ten shillings. She had to “wash” for the village to get the wherewithal to buy bread for their seven children. A sad, thin, long, red-nosed family they were; the sight of them made one almost forgive the father.

One man who lived by himself in a cottage right out on the moor needed neither companionship nor drink. He found his comfort in Shakespeare, whose every word he had memorised. To look at he was like a moorland sheep—long of leg and pale of eye. Sometimes he came to Staithes on Saturday evenings, when he would quote Shakespeare to us by the hour in Frankie's shop.

Mr. Redmond was stonemason to the estate. He had to tramp across the moor to his work, whatever the weather. To him oblivion came in bursts, when he would be missing for weeks. Ambition to travel came over him as, thoroughly intoxicated, he would get into any train that was passing through Staithes Station. When asked for his ticket, he paid till all his money had gone. Once he found himself in North Scotland. Another time in London. He saw something of life that way. How he got home, no one knew. He just arrived more or less sobered and settled down again at his trade for another few months. His wife, Mrs. Redmond, ran the farm in which they lived. The Mackies always stayed there when they came.

"As clean as any drawing-room," Mrs. Redmond used to say of her pigsty. She loved her pig and made quite a companion of him. His person was kept spotless. It was a real tragedy to her when he had to be turned into bacon—she wept about it for days.

We stayed with her for a long time later on, and I went down each day to work in Staithes.

Mrs. Redmond was full of fun and the joy of life, and proud of her physique. She could reap and she could sow and she could plough with the best, but she could not cook. The bottle that held her indigestion mixture sat next to her teeth on a shelf in the larder. She was a fearsome sight when she put them in for special occasions.

Sis and I basked in the warmth of her nature—we needed some warmth up there in the winter. When I came back from the day's work and it was freezing outside, often we went with her to sit on the straw in the cowshed; it was

warm there by the sweet-smelling cows. The horn lantern set on the ground threw spiky shadows on the floors and walls, lighting up the cows' rumps, tails and pink udders.

I painted a good deal up at Roxby. None of this work was very good: it was not kept, but that inspiring landscape had considerable effect on my development.

There was never such air; you just had to jump and race and shout upon those lonely heights, for the very joy of being there—alive. A switchback of a road ran on for ever between a land of waist-high heather, of broom and gorse that bloomed in the spring and summer. Larks sang perpetually in the sky. On the hillock the black-faced horned sheep stamped at you as it stood over its new-dropped lamb. Danby Beacon rose black out of the distant moors to touch the clouds that rolled above.

“Coom thea ways in,” would be the welcome we received when calling at some lonely place on our tramps over the moor. No shelter was refused nor payment accepted for the best food they could give.

Built on to the stout house with its blackened red-tiled roof is the octagonal mill where a horse walks round to grind the corn. The midden is enclosed by sties and sheds. From inside a shed come sounds of clanking pails and a soft swishing throb, a tinny note. Through the open door we see a blue-white trickle between the red fingers of a farmer's boy as he pulls and coaxes the mauvish teats. From under his cap peak, a tawny tuft of hair pushes to mingle with the cow's own plushy coat of deepest red and purest white. Glasses in our hands we stand. “Warm from the cow,” they say as we drink and wonder how from pasture so poor, so rich a milk can come.

Our visits to the moor were intermittent; Staithes was our real home.

“Aud Jarge Longster's” black coble had its place at the south end of the beach, the only boat to go after salmon.

He lived in the little whitewashed cottage with the thatched roof on the quay and had often posed for me; he was always willing to "oblige" in any way he could—for anyone; that was his nature. "T'best man in the place," everyone said.

"Jarge" was a wonderful type to paint: a little bent-backed man, his hands reached down to his knees, his nose and chin nearly met, his face was surrounded with grey whiskers. Over his guernsey he always wore a waistcoat that was green and brown with age, his sou'-wester was flattened down to his head by the heavy weights carried there. His look was of one of great age, yet he was active enough, and gentle; a spirituality shone in his blue eyes. Of all the religious people in Staithes he was the most fervent. He knew the Bible by heart. The tragedy in his life was that his younger brother was a drunkard.

One wild night, when the tide was running high, the brother left the "Cod and Lobster" at closing time and was never seen again. "He must a' missed his way at t'corner and gone over int' sea." The railed bulwark by the stone slipway where the "Cod and Lobster" stood was dangerous, even in the daytime. When there was a "wind" and high tide running no one could pass because of the tons of water coming over; they had to squeeze through Dog Lope. We had seen part of the old "Cod and Lobster" washed down soon after we got there, before they built that bulwark to protect the new one.

No one had seen the brother after he went staggering out into the darkness; he just disappeared. The next day his body was washed up on the beach. When it was being carried up, "Aud Jarge" from his window saw and came out of his house to meet it. He told the men to put the corpse down on the quay just where they were. There and then, he delivered an impassioned speech while standing over it. After praying to God to forgive his brother, he turned to the crowd, exhorting them to repent of their evil before it was too late. "My pore brither has died in sin!

All ye who sin take heed, lest like him ye are caught unawares and go down to the bottomless pits of Hell, into the fires that are never quenched.”

Poor “Aud Jarge” never got over the shock. The belief that his own brother was burning in the Eternal Fires for ever more, and that he, George, might have turned him to Salvation preyed on his mind. Not long afterwards our friend fell down unconscious in a stroke.

His sick-room was a Hogarthian scene: the low-ceilinged bedroom was crossed with beams; the window overlooked the sea; against the whitewash of a wall stood a four-poster bedstead, the curtains, valance and frill made of red turkey twill; propped up with pillows with the red for a background was “Aud Jarge” in a tasselled night-cap, fanning himself with a peacock feather fan, for the room was hot and stuffy, full of men and women. The window was not made to open.

Everyone was saying what a good man “Jarge” had always been. How long would he last? “He’ll only live for a week,” they declared. Meanwhile “Jarge” waved the elegant plumes he held, nodding and smiling in acknowledgment; he could understand, but, having lost all power of speech, could say no word. He did live for the week allotted to him.

At every visit I, as all comers had to, “put my lips to the bottle.” We were then asked: “Do you think it is a good ‘bottle?’” If it were not nasty tasting, it was not considered good medicine. Usually the visitors had more of the medicine than the sick person.

It was almost an offence to suggest a means to prolong life; the grand moment had arrived when the bed became a throne. There was more than a touch of grandeur in the patient, who reigned supreme in his last illness. Attendants were at his bedside day and night, till the last breath was drawn. There was no desire to put off his triumph when all interest was centred in that room.

He had, perhaps, come unwanted into the world; from childhood he had starved, sweated, felt the cold and wet:

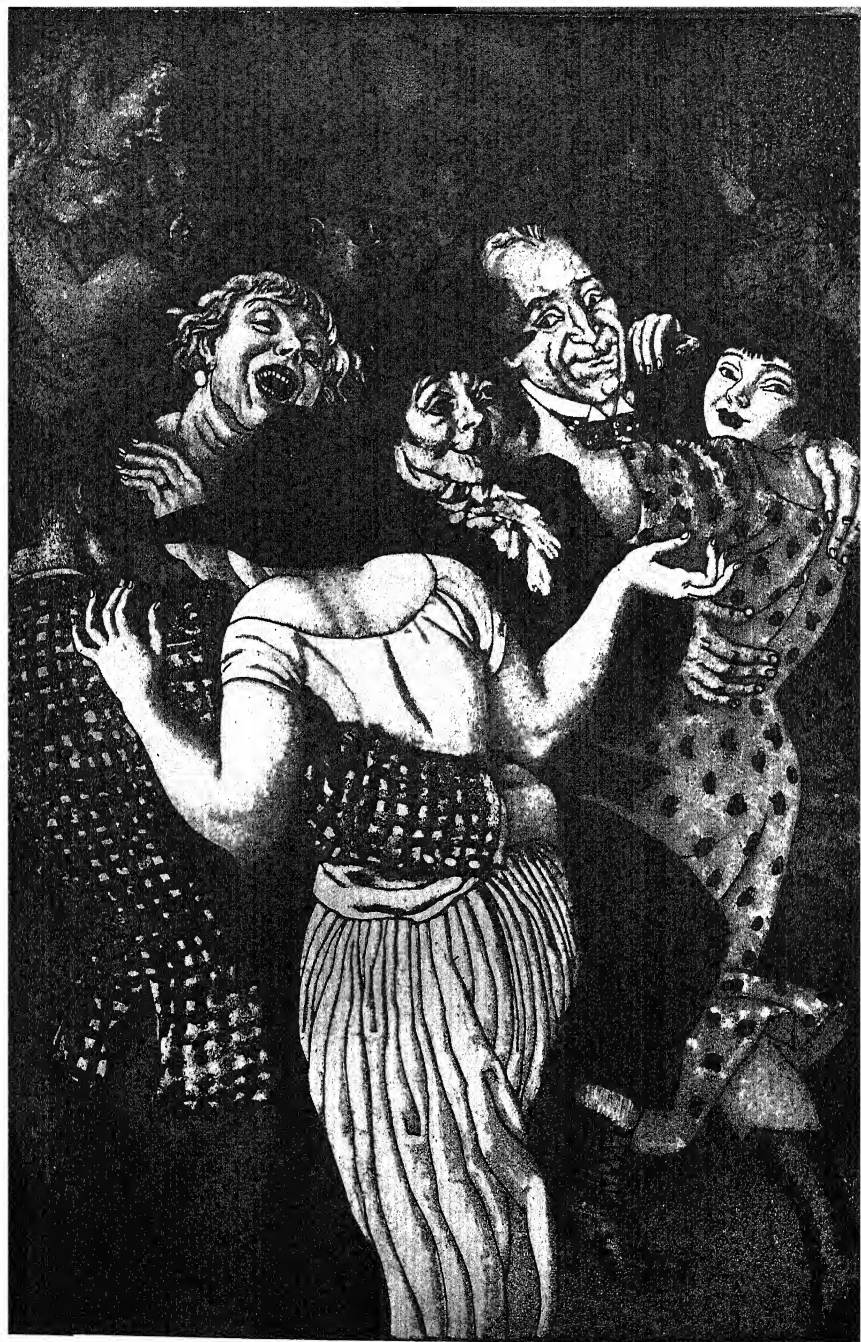
just a fisherman who daily took his life in his hands to find food for others—a nobody.

What matter if the air is too close and talk makes life the shorter? Here are those whom he knows and loves, to tend his every want and sing his praises as breath grows fainter. When he has gone they will weep bitterly for him, as for any monarch.

There was a "big comp'ny at 'Jarge's' funeral," when the coffin was borne to Hinderwell by his old friends.

A few days afterwards, I met the old woman who had "fettled" "Jarge's" house. Though we knew him so well, we had never got a word from her. On this occasion, she stopped me in the street to say, "If 'Aud Jarge' dean't git t'Heaven, there's ither folks i' Steers as'ull have to mend their manners!"

In storm, wave and waterspout fell on roof and down chimney or washed a carelessly left boat right through a house wall, or even washed the walls themselves down. I stood in the shelter of Cawbor once to watch a house go down and see the blocks of stone tossed into the air like pebbles. When the wind got up voices were heard on the quay crying out, "Carry out the bedridden; all will be under water here when tide is up!" Old people remembered when houses stood where it was now deep sea every day at high tide.



SOME HOLIDAY (*Aquatint*) 1925



THE THREE GRACES (*Aquatint*) 1926

CHAPTER VIII

A WEDDING

IN the winter of 1903, Sissie went again to France. Harold had commissions to execute in Nottingham; to be near him I went to a village not far away called East Leake, hoping to find there landscape and farm subjects. It was cold and wet, the country was flat and dull after Yorkshire.

Late April came and with it my first varnishing ticket from the Academy for a picture done at Staithes called "Mother and Child." Not having any money to spend on fares and hotel, I did not go to London. A few days later another letter came with the R.A. stamp on the envelope. I dared not open it—a mistake had been made—my picture was not hung after all. On opening the envelope at last I could not believe what I read: "Your picture 'Mother and Child' has been purchased by Edward Stott, R.A., for the sum of twenty pounds."

I remember reading it again and again, thinking that someone was playing a poor joke on me. It was impossible that Edward Stott should buy a picture of mine; he must admire the frame and want it for one of his own pictures; but twenty pounds is too much for a frame like that—I gave only ten shillings for it in an old shop! I passed the morning in doubt, exhilarated and miserable by turns, until I met Harold at the station, who assured me there was no fraud, and that Stott must really have bought it.

Harold and I had decided to marry that year. A commission Harold had to paint the Mayor of Newark made us fix the date of our wedding for June 3rd 1903, to take place at the old church at West Leake.

I gave up painting for the time being to make my own clothes. The weather cleared up and there were warm

corners in the orchard. Overhead the fruit trees blossomed while Ethel, Sis and I stitched my wedding dress.

Harold and I did not intend to set up house. Neither of us wished to do so, nor could we afford it. To be free to go where we wished was our desire. Everyone knowing this gave us trunks, hat-boxes, writing-cases and collar-boxes as wedding presents.

Sis came back from France and together we went up to Staithes to clear our cottage there. All our things were auctioned from the doorstep. Everything and everybody was wet with sea-fog. From behind the crowd which had gathered round the cottage, some antique dealers glowered at us; we had no good old pieces, and hours must pass before the next train back to Whitby.

Uncle sent fifty pounds as a wedding present and wrote to say that he was coming to give me away. One of his first questions was, "What is your wedding dress?" I told him I had made it out of one of the linen sheets in Mother's trousseau, and he asked, "And what did you do with the quilt?"

Early on the morning of the third, Ethel, Sis and I got up to prepare the refreshments for the guests. I remember strawberries and cream, and cutting sandwiches.

Other guests besides Uncle Arthur, Sissie and Harold's father and sisters, were Fred Milmine, our old friend, and Miss Gutjahr and Resi Keyser, friends from Nottingham. Miss Gutjahr was a teacher of singing; through her influence I had acquired a love of good music; the lovely Resi, who lived with her, was her niece.

The village horse-cab was hired for the occasion; the cushions were rather worn and musty to smell, but the driver had a white flower in his buttonhole and a white ribbon tied on his whip. In relays, the guests were driven to church, the equipage then returned to fetch Uncle and me—neither of us thought of looking to see what time it was. When we arrived at the church we were too early by a quarter of an hour. Uncle and I stood at the top of the

aisle; everyone roared with laughter to see Harold in his new grey suit walking up the aisle to the organ solo accompaniment I should have had. The parson was gardening when someone ran to tell him I was in the church; he was still pulling his surplice into place when he rushed from the vestry.

While I was changing into my new navy blue going-away suit, the dear little fat landlady came in with her own wedding night-gown for a present. It reached only to my knees and was made of thickest calico, embroidered and frilled.

Meanwhile, Uncle had taken Harold into a cowshed away from the other people and putting some sovereigns into his hand said, "Laura's and your first-class fare to London."

Harold and I, ready dressed to go away, came out into the farmyard, filled with people in summer dress, all throwing confetti. The farmer and his wife, unwilling to waste money on such useless stuff, pelted us with rice. Never had chickens such a feast! They flew all round our heads to catch it and cluttered pecking at everybody's feet. We could not see where we were walking, such whirring of wings and squawking. They had even to be shoed out of our cab.

Just as our train was pulling out of the station and we thought all demonstrations were over, there was an awful bang of a fog-signal that the station-master had put under our carriage.

Everyone at St. Pancras knew we were just married, although we had changed carriages to get away from the confetti. Harold gave the porter who moved our boxes a whole shilling, an enormous extravagance.

To spend our "honey money" as they called it in Staithes, we went to the Arundel Hotel on the Embankment. There we had a handsome and romantic-looking waiter. We went to stay there every time we went to London afterwards because we wanted him to wait on us again.

London was to me almost unknown. I had never had the chance of going to the Galleries time after time. An

exhibition of Dutch pictures was then being held at the Guildhall. That exhibition was the cause of our interest in Holland and her Art treasures. The years spent there later on had a great influence on our work, particularly in Harold's case.

After a week in London, we went to the "Hope and Anchor" in Rye. We did little work there and got brown as berries. When we passed through London on our way back, we lunched at the "Monico" and had veal and ham pie and meringue *à la crème*, our way of celebrating for many years afterwards.

Then followed the wettest summer. I tried to paint landscape outside Nottingham, while Harold finished his commissions in the town. We were very glad to leave and go back in the autumn to Yorkshire, where we planned to live at Roxby with Mrs. Bowman.

We walked down to Staithes every day to work. Our studios were a converted stable and loft behind the Post Office.

Ignoring the weather, we never missed a day's work. Through the mud and sometimes flood, we ploughed our way down the lanes, no matter if it blew or rained or hailed. Our cheeks were sometimes cut by icy particles of snow horizontally driven by a gale. Crossing the big field by Bowman's before we reached the shelter was the worst fight; a real struggle to get across that open part in bad weather—the cold agonising until we were warmed by walking.

I was recently reminded of it all by a letter from Jimmy James's youngest daughter, who wrote to me from Canada. In her letter she said: "I can remember seeing you and Mr. Knight coming down over the hill every day in your white mackintoshes."

We were proud of those mackintoshes bought from a shop that catered for hunting people, and of our thick high boots made specially for us by Welford's of Whitby. I

tried Lancashire clogs, but neither of us could bear the clank the iron made on the stony roads.

Our faces glowed after the walk home. A twig fire was blazing in our grate. By seven o'clock Mrs. Bowman had ready our big meal of the day and soon after it was on the table a scratching sounded on the door: Bob the sheep-dog, back from getting in the cattle, hungry for the scraps on our plates. In a second he had cleared all, then choosing the best place on the hearth-rug, he let all four legs go loose, to flop down and no one could move him till we went to bed, no matter how much we shoved or what difficulty Harold and I had in fitting the legs of our chairs in between his. Poor Bob did the work of several men every day; he ran hundreds of miles rounding cattle on the hilly fields. He had never had a real friend, but when he was used to us, he became quite a pet.

I remember many nights, sitting with our feet propped up by the side of the big mantelshef, Bob lying all over the boots we were trying to dry, and the wind going whew-whew in the old open chimney.

"They say t'snow's ten feet deep in the drifts to-night," Mrs. Bowman would come in and say. Sometimes we waked in the morning to find wreathes of it collected on our pillows, blown in through the open window close to our heads. A film of ice often covered our bath water.

We read Shakespeare aloud to each other every evening one winter. I do not think Othello was finished, because neither of us could read it without being overcome with emotion.

We went for a few months to Nottingham, hoping that Harold might get some commissions. We had converted a top office on the South Parade into a studio.

It was a depressing return. We had dismal lodgings overlooking a back-yard full of the rotting stumps of brussels sprouts that, like the clothes-props, leant in all directions. Our sitting-room walls were pink-washed, on them hung

six enormous photographs of hundreds of brewery employees, all looking exactly alike.

Our walk across the Race-course every day reminded me of old schooldays. No. 9 and No. 35 Noel Street were just the same, but for the greying of the brick and slates; the laburnum I had planted in the garden of No. 9 had gone.

We paid two visits to Nottingham, trying to form a connection there, until we realised the stupidity of doing so. We always went back to Roxby little better off than when we left. Out of the pictures we took, the best ones were sold for next to nothing; they had been shown nowhere, our reputations were in no way enhanced. We decided, no matter what the difficulties, to give up all idea of making Nottingham our centre. When we had work ready it must be taken to London and shown there.

One man to whom we most regretted saying good-bye was J. H. Fletcher, formerly a School of Art master. He was a small, unmarried, middle-aged man with a big head and fierce sandy eyebrows; he had a great big heart and soul. He encouraged Harold and me to do the best we were capable of. Though a failure in his work, he was a success in life; no one could come in contact with his idealism without feeling its influence.

Hanging in his office was a portrait I had painted of Harold before he went to Paris. Mr. Fletcher had found it lying on the cobble-stones in the market for sale with a lot of rubbish; he had bought it for twopence. When we saw it varnished and set in a handsome carved frame, we were surprised—quite “old mastery,” and very like Harold in those days. Harold was reading in the portrait, he would not sit unless allowed to do so. He was then wearing a small moustache, which was shaved off soon after because, twirling it one day, he pulled the whole of one side off.

CHAPTER IX

DANBY MOOR

HAROLD and I left Nottingham for the last time with only fifteen pounds in our pockets. "Shaking the dust from our feet," we exclaimed.

We went to London for a few days; it was early January. I shall never forget the Strand as I saw it one evening. The trampled snow had frozen, making of the roadway a sheet of ice. Almost every ten or twenty yards a horse was down—an agonising sight to see them slipping, struggling and steaming as they tried to regain their footing.

To interest picture-dealers in our work was the object of our visit. We ate humble pie in Bond Street and other galleries, touring all with our packages of water-colours and canvases. "Hawking" we used to call it, which we did regularly afterwards.

Our pictures had seemed so precious when we packed them. How worthless they appeared when handled by a pessimistic dealer who shuffled the drawings like a pack of cards. As examples for us to follow, he would show some of his own stock, abomination and pot-boiling rubbish to us.

Ernest Brown, who had recently joined partnership with the Phillips brothers at the Leicester Galleries, was the first dealer to give us encouragement and to show his belief in our work. This led to our holding many exhibitions there in later years.

There was little of that fifteen pounds left when we got back home to Roxby, where we went to live again with Mrs. Bowman, who proved a friend; she allowed us to go on living with her on credit, and never troubled us or reminded us how big our debt to her became. "I know you will pay me when you get the money," she assured us. We

too had perfect confidence that something would turn up before the situation got too desperate.

One Sunday on the moor we met a wretched-looking tramp. As he passed, Harold drew our last half-crown out of his pocket, saying, "Shall I give it to him? It isn't much use to us." The man was surprised when Harold threw the coin to him. I suppose he thought we looked as poor as himself.

It was fun to give away the last money we had in the world; for the moment we were so filled with the sport of it, we forgot even so small a sum might be useful. I owed a child threepence for posing, and for a week I dared not go near the street where she lived lest I should meet her.

Neither of us worried about our difficulties; we treated them as a joke. Both of us were working too hard to think about money, and besides, Harold was painting a particularly good picture.

We had put by just enough to pay for the cases and carriage to send our pictures up to the Royal Academy. We packed them ourselves in the carpenter's yard. If they were accepted and hung, our minds were made up to go up to the Academy for varnishing day, but prospects were nil. With our usual optimism, we felt sure that something would happen, but the time crept on and it did not happen. When hope had been abandoned, at the last moment Harold remembered the offer of his old friend Fred Milmine—if Harold should ever find himself in difficulty, he would always lend him a fiver or so—if he had it to lend. A letter was sent to Milmine.

Our clothes were in a bad state; they needed considerable renovating. I learned how to do *stoppeur* work to fill in the pieces of cloth worn away in Harold's suit. Days were spent darning, washing, sponging with ammonia and pressing with the charcoal-heated iron that we took everywhere.

My only suit, the going-away one, was dreadfully faded and shabby. Harold unpicked the twelve gores that formed the skirt for me to turn. I can see him now, pipe in mouth,

pecking at the stitching with a pen-knife, by the light of the oil lamp. At his feet Bob lay stretched with curly bits of black cotton sprinkled all over his golden-brown and white coat.

On the Saturday before varnishing day, our tickets came; we were both "hung," in the same post was a letter enclosing the five-pounds loan from Milmine.

Varnishing day that year coincided with Easter. A cheap trip to London was being run from Whitby on Sunday evening. We planned to make use of that trip, but to do so we had to walk the thirteen miles from Roxby; no coast trains ran that day.

Sunday's dawn was lurid and red. The ominous sky was laden with wet. "It may ho'd oop till you get there," we were told.

We set off early to walk across the moor, through the thigh-deep ling that swished our legs as we strode between the tufts covered with the dead brown bells of the preceding year. The moor was in its most theatrical mood. Hanging in heavy stillness overhead were piles of dark cloud pierced by sun-shafts, picking out, in the unnatural manner of lime-light, here a patch of heather, here a stout farm-place, here an emerald field, giving each the brilliance of a stage scene, set in deep-toned desolation.

We were right on top of the moor when we came across a lone lamb that took an extraordinary fancy to Harold and would follow him. Perhaps it was the smell of the Conne-mara homespun coat he was wearing that attracted the pretty black-faced creature, only a day or two old. We could not take it with us to London, so the mother had to be found—the cause of our first delay.

We were really sorry to leave the moorland when we reached the road at midday. We had just sat down to our dinner of bread and cheese at an inn when rain started to fall; before we finished our meal the drops had turned into streams, dropping straight down.

We waited for it to lift before going out again as we

comforted ourselves by saying, "It's too heavy to last long." The rain came down just as hard, perhaps harder.

"Rain or no rain, we must start now or we shall miss the train," we said and made up our minds to face the weather. Before half a mile had been covered we were soaked to the skin. When still two or three miles from Whitby, we realised that to catch our train we must run. I remember feeling it impossible to keep up the pace. We had to sprint when, still half a mile from the station, we saw our train getting up steam.

We bundled into a carriage just in time, both of us almost dead with exhaustion. Two more miserable wretches it would be hard to imagine—drenched with rain and mud and sweat. In the crowded carriage, people drew themselves away from us as far as possible, water flowed off us to soak the seats and make a pool on the floor that trickled out of the door.

Not long before I had read about some Arctic explorers—the book had told how, when their boots got soaked, they would dry them on their chests at night while asleep in their bags. I stripped my feet and sat on them; boots and stockings were tucked under my jersey. They were abominably uncomfortable, and just as wet after being there for hours—in fact, still wet when I packed them to go back home, after they had stood in our room at our Chelsea lodgings for five whole days.

On our journey to London we had an hour to wait at York. By that time we were deadly cold and our teeth were chattering. Fortunately there was a big fire burning in the restaurant and we stood in front of it until we were ashamed of filling the room with steam. It did not dry us properly, but with the help of a meal of grilled chops and a drink of whisky, a desperate measure that neither of us was used to, we got a little warmth into our bodies.

We reached King's Cross at about four o'clock. We went to the waiting-room, hoping to spend the rest of the night there, but every seat and bench was occupied, so with

reckless extravagance we took the cheapest room they had at the Station Hotel.

We quarrelled about nothing when we got up next morning to go to the Academy. On our way there the wind blew chill through our wet clothes. We were utterly wretched and wondered why we had come. . . .

As we walked up the Academy steps, Arnesby Brown, who was just coming down, called out directly he saw Harold; "Congratulations, Knight; your picture is splendid. It is hung on the line and it has been bought by Frank Dicksee for Brisbane."

We met Frank Dicksee, who confirmed what Arnesby Brown had said; although he offered congratulations, he was quite calm, just as if Harold's having sold that picture did not mean the world to us. I scarcely looked at my own picture up in the skies. Nothing mattered. We had a whole hundred pounds to our credit—it seemed like a million.

It was not to be paid for till the Exhibition closed—perhaps as well. As it was, our celebration must have been modest, for we stayed the five days in London and paid our fares and all expenses out of Milmine's five pounds. I even bought a new hat that cost one and sixpence in the King's Road: a boy's sailor hat, which with the brim turned down I wore for years.

We again found ourselves in the middle of the night at York station on the return journey. We had only one shilling left in our pockets and spent our time walking up and down the platforms snivelling. We had taken no harm from the wet and cold we had suffered on the way, but had both picked up a germ in London and had feverish colds.

It was about eight o'clock in the morning when we reached Staithes. We felt a little sorry for ourselves as we walked up to Roxby, but were comforted by the idea of going straight to bed.

At Mrs. Bowman's was a message waiting: "Mr. Redmond

died in the night. Will Mr. and Mrs. Knight go straight to Mrs. Redmond directly they arrive."

Poor old Redmond had made his last journey, and no one was going to ask him for his ticket.

The air was sharp and clear on the high land; we shivered as we went to see the body which was laid out on Mr. and Mrs. Redmond's bed. Both bed and body were completely covered with many sheets arranged in an incredible number of neat pleatings that outlined the poor old lumpy body and ape-long arms in mummy-like wrappings.

During the illness old Redmond's beard had grown; it was not seemly for him to be buried unshaven. Mrs. Redmond had really sent for us so that Harold should be present when the barber came. She could not bear to be in the room.

The Redmonds were Roman Catholics, as were many people in that district of the moor, which the Reformation had never touched.

The burial took place at Ugthorpe, three miles away. Close to the road, in a flat field, a great windmill towered, dominating all. Above a magnificently monumental cone of whitened stone, perched on a black-red cap of tiles, the grey sails flared high against the sky.

We walked with the other mourners behind the farm wagon that carried the coffin. That day the landscape was grey and monotonous in colour. The moor had lost its spell and the switchback ribbon of the road seemed endless.

Leaving the other people behind we came home by ourselves. It seemed heartless that we could not think only of Mrs. Redmond, now left quite alone. Our prospects had undergone a transformation: we had met other painters in London; we had arranged with the Leicester Galleries to hold our first exhibition there and we had a hundred pounds in prospect, enough to keep us without worry for a whole year.

CHAPTER X

HOLLAND

BEFORE marriage there had been little opportunity of meeting other painters. All was changed when Harold and I went together to see his friends at Hinderwell; H. S. Hopwood or Fred Jackson often invited us to their houses on Sunday afternoon.

Both Mrs. Hopwood and Mrs. Jackson were bored with hearing so much about art, but we enthusiasts took little notice of them. Mrs. Jackson was quite resigned as she made tea and supper ready. Mrs. Hopwood, on the other hand, possessed social gifts: a woman who longed for town life, luckily she had the gift of humour, or she could not have borne the long, lonely winters. With tolerance we allowed ourselves to be entertained by her wit and tales.

She told of young Bunny, Hopwood's son, who had suddenly burst into floods of tears while out shopping with his mother. "What is t'matter wi' poor bairn?" everyone asked. Bunny cried from where he stood at the door, "The sun has come out and Daddy wanted a grey day to finish his picture!"

The house of Hopwood was gay or sad as his work went well or ill, he was so completely engrossed in a "wash" flowing just as it should. His studio was filled with discarded pieces of paper that had been thrown away when the first touches had not been sufficiently exquisite.

Fred Jackson's was a more robust influence. He painted out of doors in any weather. Under the mittens he wore, his hands were swollen, stiff and chapped, as were the edges of his ears and the wings of his nostrils. The two men, differing so essentially, had in common their love for their work; picture-making was the whole world to them.

On a Sunday afternoon in the winter Harold and I always

arrived in time to see their pictures by daylight; then a perfect orgie of painting talk would be indulged in. I sat silent, proud to be listening to men who could actually speak of the giants of the Art World as friends, use their Christian names, tell of their methods and even tales of their foibles.

How well I recollect leaving those snug rooms for the blasting cold of the lane outside, which only further quickened the fever for achievement on one's own account. The light from the table-lamp still lingered in our eyes, making of the night a blankness till the wind washed the glare away, when a shimmer in the gulf of dark marked where the road ran, and the outline of bare hawthorns, all bent away from the sea wind, showed in faint silhouette against the sky.

While in London, Harold and I had met Hopwood. He said, "I am going to Holland next year; will you go?"

We had promised to go, although at the time we did not see any prospects of being able to do so; however, the three of us went in June of the following year by the ordinary route.

We had a rough passage, and unlacing my boots before getting into my bunk had a bad effect on digestion.

It was hot early morning when we reached The Hook. Blonde women of sturdy build in caps and wooden shoes sold baskets of strawberries to us on the platform. On our way to Amsterdam we saw the mist lying thick, and watched it disperse to disclose a flat land of green, spotted with black and white cattle and black and white lock gates arching over the dykes. Some of the cows had sacking tied round their middles although the weather was extremely hot.

We stayed at the "Krasnapolski" in Amsterdam. The canal smell came through the windows as we ate our breakfast. The coffee was good, as were the smoked beef slices and *honig-brod*. The canals and barges, the old houses and the costumes made us feel we had stepped backwards in time by several hundred years.

I will not attempt to describe the fair city of Amsterdam;

its thrall is still there for anyone to feel who will cross the water. When we went there so long ago no peasants were to be seen out of costume. The most beautiful was that of the Amsterdam orphans, half black, half red with a long pointed muslin collar and plain muslin cap. It was medieval. One saw many wonderful dresses in those days, which did not appear to be in use when we were there recently.

We visited the Rijks Museum that first morning. I had never heard of Rembrandt's "Night Watch"; we came into view of it without preparation at the end of the big gallery. "The Betrothal," "The Stallmeisters" were there, and the blue and yellow Van der Meer of the girl reading the letter! To have never even heard the name Vermeer! Then there was that magician with paint, Franz Hals!

In an ecstasy we rushed from Gallery to Gallery. People must have thought us lunatics; Hopwood would stop right in the middle of any road, gesticulating, hitching his bony shoulders and twitching his long legs while he cupped his hands in a square to frame a view, shouting, "Look at that! Look at the sun on those barges! Look at the emerald of that door when the patch of sun comes through the trees! Look at that woman!" Not caring who it was. Our feet wore out. To go from place to place we hired a cab; the air was almost intolerable inside, with the heat and tobacco smoke; Harold and Hopwood had found how cheaply cigars could be bought.

I remember in the restaurant of the "Krasnapolski" seeing a man eating a sandwich, a slice of beef between a small loaf of bread. He had no teeth, but no matter. No one could have eaten quicker.

If it had not been so expensive to stay in Amsterdam, we should have painted there. We had heard of a place where many painters went, called Laren, and decided to go there to see what it was like.

The *stoomtram* puffed and smoked through the country along the roadsides, a bell clanging all the way to frighten the cows off the track. We put all our traps and ourselves

in the one going north and were deposited by the Brink in Laren, the village centre, a small lake with aisles of lime trees all round it in avenues that looked like Gothic Architecture, the tall, straight stems branching at the top to form pointed arches, all the lower branches having been cut for firewood.

Hopwood went into Spanders Café under the trees, to get something for us to drink; to make his meaning clear he imitated the noise of a soda-water siphon. The café people, seeing we were English, came up close to us and said, "Vrow Kam, Vrow Kam," making us realise that we should try to find this "Vrow Kam." I sat on the luggage while Harold and Hopwood went to look for her. They did not go far. Close by was a large building with "Pension Kam" written on it.

Vrow Kam was the English widow of a Dutchman. All the foreign painters stayed at her *pension*. They were chiefly Americans, with a sprinkling of other nationalities; at that time we were the only English.

To be plunged into such a *milieu* was quite an important experience; very serious work was being done there. As new-comers we were placed next to Vrow Kam at the long dining-table, where there was little peace. Between excited directions to the servants the harassed Vrow had to serve us all with the many courses and listen to complaints: "The coffee is weak," "The eggs aren't soft-boiled."

"Vat a vint," the little lady said as at last she sat down to eat a morsel herself. Her one contribution to the conversation was apt enough, for the wind was always blowing over that flat country.

At the other end of the table Mr. Darling sat, presiding in the grand manner of an old inhabitant. He had been there ten years; without him the "Pension Kam" would have lost its interest; he was the centre, everyone wanted to be moved up to his end of the table and join in the more lively atmosphere there.

Mr. Darling was a painter of considerable distinction

and a great student of the Dutch Masters, the composition of their pictures and their methods—I doubt if anyone existed then who knew as much as he. He spoke little, but when he did everyone listened, for he condensed worlds of meaning into a few words. Perhaps Darling was too much of a thinker to be a prolific producer, perhaps that is why his work is so little known.

Hopwood was living on nuts and bread and cheese, a popular fad of the moment, to cure everyone of every ill. As he cracked his brazils and shelled his roasted peanuts, no one could resist his intent look that would suddenly break into a smile. Even the fountain-head Mr. Darling was captured. The day after we arrived he took us round the village to show its beauties and the farms where all the painters worked.

It was the custom to rent a place for five Gulden a week. This gave you the privilege of invading the privacy of any part of a house. You could just walk into any room and set up your easel, even if it were to paint a sick person lying in a cupboard-bed.

Any peasant belonging to the farm would pose for you, if they were not busy; one woman made it her main occupation. To have painters working in the house was usual. You were part of the household, no more encumbrance than the animals, actually wanted as contribution to the yearly income. Grandparents had posed in their cradles for famous Dutchmen. Anton Mauve had done many of his pictures of sheep grazing by the roadside at Laren. The peasants were as used to painters as to the air they breathed. No one interfered with you, unless you attempted any work without paying the proper fee; then the people would crowd round you and shove their thumb and forefinger right in front of your face, saying "Geld! Geld"! If this was ignored, children were set to drive you away.

When Mr. Darling took us round that first morning the sun sparkled on the reed thatching of the steep roofs. Through the limes that shaded the gable-ends of some of

the bigger farms sun-spots pierced to speckle with brilliance the red-brick walls and gaily painted shutters.

At the barn gates, high enough to allow a loaded wagon to pass through, Mr. Darling knocked and asked in Dutch: "Can we see?" and in we walked. The earthen floor was beaten hard underfoot, straw and hay were stacked up in the peaked roof. All round in whitewashed pens were ranged black and white cattle, calves, pigs, goats and dogs, and chickens pecked about. In the summer the peasants also lived in the barn; in some corner you might find a cupboard-bed where some of them slept.

On a little table the inevitable coffee-pot had its spirit-lamp burning for the hourly coffee, freshly ground for each drinking. The pet cat sat, occasionally dipping its paw into the milk jug. The box of hard sweets used in place of sugar was also there.

At one end of the barn was an enormous fireplace where the pot was boiled with charcoal or twigs. The smoke had made a patch of black in the centre of the big spread of Delft tiles. Round the projecting chimney a row of plates was set. To one side a woman scrubbed out milk-cans and jars at the pump.

Dogs were used to draw the carts. You would often see several large Dutch people piled behind two powerful hounds, as they padded along with silent tread, in crouching fatigue, their tongues flopping out.

There was no lack of material to paint; the Rembrandt-esque interiors, the stretch of cornfields outside, the dark pine-woods in a waste of sand, the peasants working in the soil on hands and knees.

Laren is Holland's health-resort; no canals are there. The slight rise in the land is imperceptible—no up and down in the tree-bordered roads. But we did have the White Mountains, as the sand-dunes were called, the highest being actually twenty feet above sea-level.

With Mr. Darling's help we found places to work in. Some of the farms were well-lit and spacious as any studio,

but it was late in the season to find any big place unoccupied by another painter. Some of the poorer farms were not so imposing; often several peasants lived with all their animals crowded into two small rooms. I was unfortunate in my choice of one of these; after two days' work there I had to find another; the smell of the goats and pigs made me sick. The peasants, oblivious to the discomfort, ate their meals indoors with unconcern and appetite.

I then went to a larger farm to work where the Vrow cooked the rice or potatoes for dinner while she posed for me, having to get up constantly to stir, or put fresh sticks underneath the kale-pot. When ready, this was put on a table, and six or eight people drew up their chairs. Men's caps came off, Grace was said and all dipped their bare hands into the pot and helped themselves. There was only one spoon, and that a wooden one. The standing children fitted themselves between their elders and stretched over for their share. The meal always ended in a hubbub, as the children screamed and fought for the scrapings and the house-dog, nosing round for the fallen scraps, yelped when wooden shoes stamped on its paws.

The work done during those first months in Holland was promising. We were full of enthusiasm to return to study the wealth of pictures in the museums and become familiar with the new life and subjects we had seen, so that something more important might be achieved.

Back in Yorkshire, Mr. Hopwood brought people to see the work we had done. Through these introductions we made a friend of Mr. J. G. Lyon from Pontefract, who bought many pictures later on. Our meeting him led to much happiness and enlargement of our social life.

Mrs. Hopwood rifled her wardrobe to find clothes for me. I had never been so smartly dressed, but her toques were impossible. I would leave her house like a peacock; we would hardly reach the gate before Harold would say, "Take that darn thing off your head."

Next year we went again to Holland, this time in a cargo-boat that left London from the Tower Wharf, the fare cost only one pound return—available for six months.

At the Pension Kam we were promoted to Mr. Darling's end of the table. Vrow Kam made a feeble protest; she never could understand the desire to get there.

We had arrived early in the season and could take our pick of the farms to work in. Almost every day brought people we had met the previous year; some with the glory of Salon awards and successes fresh upon them. Bartold, the American, had been given a Second Medal for a picture so big that he had been obliged, while painting, to place it diagonally across his room.

Henri Villain, the Frenchman, had received a mention; he was in a flutter of excitement. When he got off his night train from Paris, he could not even stop to wash his face or hands, but came to tell us all about it just as he was with the train dirt still in the corners of his eyes.

"*Je me recueille pour mieux sauter,*" I remember him saying, an excuse for taking a week's holiday before starting another gigantic masterpiece.

Villain was an attractive little man, but his looks were spoilt for quite a while that year when a French bulldog belonging to an American girl hung on to his nose with its teeth.

New Scholarship students arrived from various American cities, and Beatrice How came for a while, fresh from her latest success with a picture of a baby in the New Salon. She wore quite a halo, being *hors concours*. A radiant boyish creature called Mackay came from America, who was going to learn to paint by copying Franz Hals and then Velasquez and then someone else and someone else after that. The atmosphere was tense with the thought of a new season's new endeavour. All were full of hope, all hard workers. Among us, middle-aged Mr. Darling sat aloof and silent, his reddish beard and hair whitening—the Great Oracle, who could solve all youth's problems and beat everyone

at throwing horseshoes over a peg stuck in the sandy ground.

The enormous sponge that Uncle Arthur had given to Harold was hung in our bedroom window; our flag it was called.

During the early months of that summer, every evening after dinner the whole troop of us walked over the downs to listen to the nightingales in the scrub oak. Then someone produced a ball and someone else a walking-stick and so started our baseball games which eventually turned into serious business with a hard ball and a real bat made by the local carpenter. I was the only girl who stuck to the team.

One American painter called Krehbiel, who was later made Head Master at the Chicago School of Art, could throw a ball in a curve. I could never touch even a straight ball with the bat, although I could catch pretty well and not get hurt. We wore no masks and the short heather on which we played was pretty rough. Our game was professional in some ways, we even had a Rattler. Krehbiel or Raphael took this part in turns. "Watch him, watch him, he's getting rattled," they shouted derisively and in what seemed to Harold and me a most unsportsmanlike way.

The close of the day would find us all in the dining-room at the *pension* playing silly games, or, if we were lucky, sitting round Darling while his three bottles of beer were being consumed, hoping he might be inspired to analyse the composition of a Jan Steen or a Rembrandt or Vermeer, listening for his short, jerky sentences that said so much, every word of which was noted. The composition he christened the "two spot"—one beloved by many of the Dutch Masters—was indicated by two fingers held up, which became the sign of the initiate among us.

We talked, we thought, we lived composition—of line—of masses—of colour. On Sundays, we and one or two others and perhaps Darling got up very early, took the *stoomtram* to Amsterdam for the Rembrandts, to The Hague for the Vermeers or to Haarlem for the Franz Hals. Our day was

spent in the Galleries examining each picture we specially admired with meticulous care.

During the week, under similar conditions in which the Masters had worked, we tried this method or that arrangement. It was almost irksome to me to work so consciously; I had to shake free very often, but was ashamed of doing so. Now I see that such theoretical work was not for me, my best work was done just for love of itself, when I forgot about learning. I never regret the intense study and serious and reverent attitude towards the world's masterpieces that came through the influence around us, which up till that time had been absent in my artistic life.

After six months' work we returned to England, by the same cargo-boat, just in time to make use of our return tickets.

Two days before we left Laren, Harold's face swelled up so badly with toothache that we had to call in a Dutch doctor who advised poulticing the outside. This seemed to make it swell all the more. Harold was in a terrible state to travel, but we had to go, having come to the end of our resources.

On the cargo-boat this time we looked down at a deck-load of netted cabbages. The cabin we slept in had "1st Officer, 2nd Officer" printed on the door. We paid a small extra sum for each meal and ate with the Captain. The first time we sat down, two Dutchmen passengers also took their seats, armed with paper packages of their own food. The Captain gave them queer looks when they refused the ship food and told them sharply, "If you want to eat that damn stuff, you must take it to your cabin." After that the two of them tried to make everything as uncomfortable as they could, swinging in and out of their room just behind us all through every meal. The paper bags that were never out of their hands got more and more dishevelled and greasy. While on deck they perpetually shoved chunks of food into their mouths.

We almost collided with another vessel when, nearing the

mouth of the Thames, we ran into a fog. Then came the Dutchmen's great tragedy. We were going at half speed and were late, they had swallowed their last crumbs. Everyone else had eaten dinner at the usual time. At about nine o'clock the Dutchmen could bear the pangs of hunger no longer; a half cold, half cooked meal was put on the table for them, followed by a terrible quarrel with the steward about payment. "We could get twice as good food for half the money at Lyons' Popular," they shouted.

Instead of reaching our wharf at six o'clock in the evening it was after eleven o'clock when the boat came to her moorings in the middle of the river. If it had been after twelve o'clock, the Captain would have been obliged to allow us to stay aboard for the night. Those two Dutchmen did everything in their power to cause delay, so they could sleep another night for no extra cost, but they did not succeed. The Captain too was a Dutchman. . . .

It was lucky for us there was so much hurry. The Excise man chalked our boxes without unlocking them, indeed he must have been deaf and stupid when we told our lie about having no tobacco, we did it so badly. We had several pounds of the hard cakes in our trunks and paint-boxes—enough, we reckoned, to pay our fares. A false economy—every pipe-smoker in England we knew begged for some of it. It was our first and last attempt to evade the law.

There were no boats ready to take us ashore so late on a Sunday night. In answer to the Captain's call one appeared at last, rowed by two "wharf rats," both drunk. One little man wore an enormous overcoat, the sleeves of which fell inches over his fingers—we were sure he had nothing on besides; nothing but bare flesh showed underneath when he tripped over the trailing skirt, a clumsiness that caused the crazy little boat to lurch while the Dutch mate, whom we did not know could speak any English, shouted from the bridge rails, "Why don't you take your b——y coat off?"

Krehbiel, who was with us, and I got into the boat. The

Thames was inky, wiggly-woggly lights reflected in its blackness. As our big trunk packed with all our work was lowered, the overcoat man tripped again, lost his grip on the handles and for one awful moment all our hopes for the future balanced on the gunwale. Krehbiel, with great presence of mind, darted forward to pull the box in-board, nearly upsetting the whole boat-load. From the deck above Harold watched all, peering out of his puffy-face wound round and round with white bandages.

The two Dutchmen crowded into the little boat at the last moment, thinking they could land at our expense. No sooner had the boat touched the wharf than they jumped ashore and took to their heels down the deserted melancholy streets near the Tower. The two boatmen were not too drunk to let them get off like that, but were out after them in a flash. The overcoat flew out before it disappeared in the darkness, we heard the patter of running and the shouts and violent language as the delinquents were caught, when a policeman suddenly appeared to decide in favour of the respectably dressed Dutchmen, who, after all, got away without having paid a penny.

We took a cab to drive to a little hotel in Southampton Row, where Harold spent a feverish night dreaming that he was high up in the sky, flying on a Venetian blind, the slats of which would keep opening.

Motor-buses had just been put on the streets; the explosions from them sounded like bombs dropping.

We moved next day to a boarding-house in Torrington Square, where we got a doctor, who soon cured Harold's face. We had little money left when we had paid his fee.

We were not worrying on that account because the next day Harold had an appointment with the flower-painter, A. F. W. Hayward, who had written to Harold asking to see the pictures we brought back with a view to buying one, and Harold had some of the best work he had ever done to show.

After I had cut Harold's hair, we arranged his pictures on chairs in the drawing-room that our hostess had given over to us for an hour or two.

Mr. Hayward came, he bought four of Harold's pictures and three of mine. The cheque came to nearly a hundred pounds. I do not suppose he ever realised what it meant to us, with only a few shillings left in our pockets. We went straight to a shop in Shaftesbury Avenue and bought a green suit that I had very much desired.

Later on we held our exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. Mr. Ernest Brown was delighted with the work, and it was a success.

After London we went back to the moor as before, and we walked down to Staithes every day. I made arrangements to work in a cottage at the top of Cawbor Hill in the same way that we had done in Laren. I rented it by the week, using the mother and children as models. While working there I saw greater poverty and misery than it seemed possible for anyone to bear.

The wages that the father earned in a mine, although he gave every penny to his wife, would not pay for rent, food and clothes for all. There were four children, Antony, Mary Ann, Anna Margaret, Elizabeth Alice and another on the way. Boots and shoes were out of the question; nearly all went barefoot. Even Antony, the eldest, could neither read nor write, for every child must come shod to school. No food was eaten in that place but dry home-made bread washed down with tea.

In the bedroom behind the small kitchen was a bundle of rags on which the children slept, and a poor iron bedstead for the father and mother, shared by each new baby when it came. I kept my materials in that room. One day when fetching something I noticed a big lump in the bed. It was a pancheon of dough that had been put there to rise. "It's nice and warm, t'bairn's just been sleepin' there," I was told.

Had the family not been of such unusual interest to paint, I could not have borne to see the suffering of those wretched people, the apathy of the woman in a perpetual state of half starvation, her terrible headaches, the screaming children that were an agony to her nerves, her loss of control when she thrashed the elder one unmercifully for "supping" and watering the "happeth" of milk he was sent to fetch for their teas. The love and kisses lavished the next moment—a good woman and mother as far as she knew, brought up perhaps in a similar house. On Saturdays the stone floor of the kitchen was scrubbed and afterwards the same water and the same cloth did duty for the children's faces, ready for Sunday. All tried to escape the infliction of cleanliness, but the pail was left till the truants came home, when they were seized, soaped and dried on the mother's sacking apron that deadened the piercing yells.

The father was good too. He adored his wife and bairns, his only joy in life. He never spoke a cross word or uttered a complaint. That winter, when there was a hard frost, he came in and sat hunched by the fire to thaw out his clothes. "Feel his shirt, Mrs. Knight," his wife would say. "It's frozen stiff as a board; ther're one oiler short at the mine an' it would be him as has to do without—working up to his knees in water an' streams droppin' doon his back." That was before the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed.

I was ashamed to go there well fed, healthy and in decent clothes. Even the oldest of my things, poor as they were, were admired, and my boots envied because they were sound. Little Elizabeth Alice, my chief model, used to take hold of my dress, which I would have been ashamed of elsewhere, saying, "Bonny skets, bonny skets." No more beautiful or wholesome-looking child than she could be found.

Last year Her Grace the Duchess of Devonshire took me to her bedroom in Chatsworth to show a picture of mine that she had bought from our first Leicester Galleries

Exhibition. It was hanging by her bed, where, she said, it had been ever since she had it. When I saw it I exclaimed, "It's Elizabeth Alice."

"Elizabeth Alice," said Her Grace. "What a pretty name, I must write it down."

All the work I did in that cottage was the best I was capable of at the time. I painted "Dressing the Children" there, that is now at the Hull Art Gallery. It was probably sold to them by the carpet merchant who gave me a Persian rug in exchange.

The cat I thought essential to this particular composition had been the problem. This poor family had no cat of their own, no one would lend their pet. Antony caught one of the wild ones that had their families in the deserted houses and lived on the fish refuse. When the basket lid was opened, the creature, terrified, flew out spitting; it raced round the kitchen to find a way out. Seeing daylight through the window, it hurled itself at the panes with a bang and flattening itself against them, turned, savage as a tiger. I have had some difficult sitters, that cat was the worst. Perhaps that was why I could never make a good portrait of it, no matter how I tried. Harold said, "It looks as if someone had trodden on it and squashed it flat."

While finishing that picture, close behind me the father lay on the hard wooden settle, the only piece of furniture in the kitchen beside the table. The constant wetting had proved too much for the poor fellow. He fell seriously ill and the doctor said he would die if he went down the mine again. I felt heartless working there so close, listening to his groans, but what I was paying them was all they then had.

When I left, Harold and I lent the husband and wife five pounds to go into fish-hawking business; with the money they bought a horse and cart. They did so well in their new venture that they even paid back part of the loan. We said they could keep the rest as a gift. I hope they are millionaires by now.

The next time we went to Laren, we stayed for a year. I do not remember how we were able to do this; I expect it was the success of our Leicester Galleries Exhibition.

We lived at one of the big farms, in two rooms that were separated from the barn, where flies and fleas were a plague. The former blackened the doorposts, which faced south, and until we bought a new mattress for our bed we were too tormented to sleep. One night Harold poured turpentine over his pyjamas to keep the pests away. It took nearly all the skin off his body.

There were yellow mushrooms shaped like miniature rhubarb leaves one could gather in quantities among the scrub oak. If put in a pan with some butter and left over a slow oil flame till dry and crisp they made a delicious luncheon. We also cooked our own breakfast. For the evening meal we went to the Pension Kam. There we again met our friends of the previous year. John Everett, who had sat next to me at table the year before, was among them.

Everett is an English painter. If his uncle, Sir John Everett Millais had been a ship's captain with several inches added to his height, he would have looked just like our Everett, who spent months on end painting at sea. He knew all the famous sailing vessels, had visited almost every part of the world and was always planning new adventure.

We first heard of John, Orpen and McEvoy from Everett, who had been their fellow-student. He told of his mother taking them all in a wagonette to a Sunday School tea, of John's genius and his studies of the Leonardo drawings at the British Museum, of his total lack of money at one time, when his friends lent their studios for him to sleep in. Everett had at home quite a big collection of both John's and Orpen's early compositions that he had picked up after evenings spent in a Gower Street studio.

Everett told us also that when at sea he signed on as a ship's officer, paying the Captain to let him do so. One of these men had tried to persuade him to join him in a

missionary venture, "a wonderful business if you took out a suitable cargo to barter in exchange for the valuables of the natives."

Everett was a typical Englishman; his pale blue eyes, fair skin, rough tweeds and thick boots singled him out astonishingly as he went his own way.

Everett could tell you where to send for the cheapest and best of everything. I have a note-book somewhere full of addresses where to get this or the other—a certain kind of coat Orpen was fond of wearing, which, if you cared to go to the Isle of Dogs, you could get for next to nothing. For years afterwards we sent to Ireland for certain very cheap home-made tweeds, and for the merest trifle we got socks from "Pims" in Dublin.

One night Everett came to the *pension* dinner with bald patches all over his head; he had been trying to cut his own hair. The independent creature! He stood alone, as if patting other nationalities on their heads—"Poor little things, you don't know what it is to be an Englishman and really live." No one could extract more out of life than he—nothing was impossible to him, if he wanted to do it. Many years later in England, Everett and I started etching together.

In comparison with my previous work which had poured out with a certain spontaneity, the last year in Holland was a disappointment. More than ever Darling's rather too precious ideas balked me, that a picture might and should be done in certain traditional ways almost killed every instinct I had. A great deal went into the stove on account of the results being so dull. I am an obstinate creature and can only work my own way. It has always been something inside that I cannot analyse that does the work and says what I have to say; interference kills it.

Harold, on the other hand, thrived and advanced into important accomplishment, showing promise of much he has done since. I tried my hardest to gain the same benefit;

the result was only a poor reflection of what he was doing, going back to the School of Art days, when I had tried to work like him. I had little satisfaction in work during this our last year in a country which had always seemed flat and enervating after the hills, cliffs and sea to which we were used. So much time spent indoors was not healthy; we both developed racking coughs that would not leave us.

The big room where I painted had cupboard-beds all round it where many people slept. For weeks a man was laid up with pneumonia in one curtained recess. I could hear his short breathing interrupted by spasms of coughing. Once only did he complain, that was when I "laid in" a large picture with turpentine. It was called "A glass of wine," hung on the line in Gallery No. 1 at the Academy in 1907, now in one of the provincial Galleries. This canvas also was exchanged for a carpet.

The floor in my studio room was stone-flagged and, in the winter, was bitterly cold. I had to wear clumpen filled with straw; even they did not prevent appalling chilblains. The stove at the end was only lit at midday with a few sticks to boil the dinner-pot, the heat never reached my end of the room. I wore nearly as many petticoats as the Vrows, who had ten thicknesses.

I painted a picture of the stove and its iron pipe backed by mauve tiling, perhaps the best I did. In it I made a discovery about composition which gave me something to boast about to Mr. Darling. It was a trifling matter, but I was very proud of finding out that you could put a figure going out of a picture close to the edge if you turned its head round, making it look at something definitely inside the subject; otherwise the woman looked as if she were going somewhere much more interesting than the part of the room painted.

It was the one and only thing I had to boast about; nearly all I did was devastatingly criticised. I remember throwing up one big composition on account of Mr. Darling's fault-finding of the actual technique of the brush-work

which was taken across instead of along the form. Now, almost invariably I work that way. It must then have been my natural method. Mr. Darling found fault too with my colour; he said it was so brilliant it made his eyes ache. Sometimes I wondered if he were really the "Oracle" we all thought him to be—I wanted to get away alone with Harold, the best critic I have known, who never forces his own point of view on another painter, but considers rather if the effort is sincere. Harold's gift of understanding comes possibly through his extraordinarily sensitive and sympathetic nature.

We became very familiar with Holland, sometimes going to out-of-the-way places, where the costumes were most elaborate, and in their lace caps the women wore queer gold spirals and elaborate ornaments.

It was fun visiting the old shops, bargaining for pieces of Delft. We made a handsome collection for a trifling cost—nearly all smashed to atoms coming home, for the Customs officials put back the pieces all loose in the cases instead of packing them properly.

After the Jewish Sabbath, almost any money offered would be taken if you arrived early enough at a shop. It was considered bad luck to turn a first customer away. Sometimes when we went to take our train back home a dealer was waiting on the platform. "Take it," he would say, handing a parcel containing what we wanted at our own price. No one expected you to pay the price asked. It was a game to them as it was to us. Even in the Kalverstraat, Amsterdam's best shopping street, you did not pay the figure exposed on the labels of any goods in the window.

From the cobble-stones of a market in Amsterdam, Harold bought for ten shillings a handsome coral and gold necklace such as all the peasant women wore. I wore it for years, until some burglars took it.

We liked to go to Huysen sometimes to get a glimpse of water. It was at the edge of the Zuyder Zee, now no longer a fishing-village since the Zee was drained and reclaimed as

land. Even then, in many districts near the sea you saw miles of reeds which had been sown; dying down year after year they formed more and more earth to be drained by dykes.

Huysen in those days was exactly as it must have been in Rembrandt's and Franz Hals' days. The types and costumes one saw leaving church on Sunday were such as might actually have posed for either painter.

One summer day a party of us went there. As it was fine, we chartered a boat to cross to Volendam. None of us had been there. It was splendid sailing across the Zee—a trifle chilly, even on such a hot day. We were a little scornful of Volendam, a show place full of beggars and peasants dressed up specially for tourists to look at. We did not care for their costumes; they were of the kind so terribly vulgarised in England, and everywhere we looked there was someone sketching a picturesque bit.

Our boatman hurried us to come back to the boat as the sea was getting rough. The misery of our return voyage is unforgettable. Across the Zee the boat wallowed, rolling like a tub after the heavy seas had broken the centre-board, which had been let down underneath to steady her. The water came over, wetting us through: the women in the party had no coats. It turned cold and most of us were deadly sick; at first we parted with our food politely over the side of the vessel, until the fishermen opened the fish tank in the middle, when we sat round it, having lost all pride.

I became almost unconscious, and just remember a fisherman lifting me in his arms to carry me to the little cabin to lie on his bunk under the blankets, where I slept until we got back to Huysen. An anxious crowd of fishermen were gathered waiting for us. A dangerously bad sea could get up quickly in that shallow water.

Never thinking it worth while to study the Dutch language properly, we had picked up enough from the peasants to



THE INFANT
(*Aquatint*)
1926



A SUNNY DRESSING-ROOM

1930

understand and make ourselves understood. When we aired our proficiency in the dialect of Boer Dutch to cultured people they roared with laughter. One day, in answer to the pestering of a guide who would follow us in Amsterdam, Harold spoke a common peasant expression. The guide swung round and bolted off without a word.

A commission from an American city to execute a life-sized copy of the "Night Watch" was in the hands of a Dutch painter. It was very interesting to watch its progress every week on the triangular screen he had made. He was carrying it out in glazes over a complete monochrome, which they said was the manner in which the Master had painted it. It was still unfinished when we left and promised to be very good, but it distressed me that he did not get the proper balance of the little dark man in the yellow jerkin.

Our hearts were nearly broken the next year when the original had been moved to a new, smaller room, built in copy of Rembrandt's own studio. You could not get back from the canvas properly. Before, when you had looked from the other end of those galleries, down the length of hundreds of feet, the figures in it had appeared more alive than the actual people who were walking about.

The greatest tragedy of all—the picture had been cleaned. Darling, who had spent half his life studying Rembrandt said much of the final work had been done in the varnish, and in taking that off the painting was spoilt. It seemed so to us, who had gone over it carefully inch by inch so many times; we knew every variation of the tone and colour by heart. The skeleton of the picture was left, but that final mastery of pulling it all into a glowing whole had gone. It affected us all as the death of someone great and dearly loved might have done, perhaps more—millions can be born and die, but there can be only one "Night Watch."

The Rembrandt Tercentenary Exhibition was held at Leiden that year. The first time we visited it my cough had just started. I had a high temperature that day. We were so excited about seeing the collection that it never

occurred to me to stay in bed at home. I had an unquenchable thirst for *lemonade citron*, I drank quarts of it that day. Instead of getting worse I felt better and better—no time to feel ill, too much to see, even the “Man in the Golden Helmet.” Then there were all the other masterpieces and what seemed like miles and miles of cases filled with etchings. We never saw them all, although we did go many times. Too much for one mortal to comprehend, but not too much for one mortal to execute.

The colony of Dutch painters in Laren kept entirely to themselves, thinking we foreigners had gone over there to copy them. We considered most of their work purely commercial, painted in either the Jacob Israels’ or the Maris brothers’ manner, for the dealers to sell like roasted chestnuts. Wilhelm and Jacob Maris we thought pot-boilers themselves at the end of their lives. We always retained our respect for Israels at his best and for Matthew Maris and Breitner and Bosboom.

Some pictures by Van Gogh were shown at an exhibition in Amsterdam. I remember little of them except their brilliant light colour and the direct simplicity with which they were seen. They were hard to understand, soaked as we were with the Old Masters. The general impression I received at the time I retain—a collection of purely decorative works. I had no eyes then to see the intensity of Van Gogh’s vision.

Newhuys had his home at Laren. They said he could not paint pictures fast enough for the American market. The day he returned from a visit to the States was turned into a fête, even the schools were closed. When he arrived, a concourse of people was waiting at the station to welcome him. The peasants took the horse out of the shafts of his carriage and themselves pulled him to his house. All the streets of the village had been decorated. Holland has a warm heart for her painters. In The Hague, where Israels lived, it was as if royalty were out for an airing when he

took a walk; men took off their hats and, to make room for him to pass, stepped off the curb into the causeway.

What pictures might have been painted of old customs in that country—customs which have now probably all passed. The swishing cut of the sickle through the high wall of corn-stalks, the grace of the falling swath, the step forward for another swinging cut. The threshing in the barns when flails banged up and down amid golden dust.

That winter was a hard one. Such frost had not been known for thirty years. Arctic winds blew unhindered across the flats. As at Roxby, our bath water was frozen in the morning, but the crust of ice was thick. Yoppe, the house-dog at our farm, an unruly little black and white woolly fellow, would choose that particular spell for his courting. Every night at the open windows of our room on the ground floor, his feet on the sill, he howled, till Harold had to get up and go to the door, but the beast was too nervous to pass through, afraid of the kick from a clumpen that he would have got had the farmer been there instead of Harold coaxing and shivering, till at last when his patience was almost exhausted the dog, tail between its legs, darted in, and after it had passed the door leading into the farm, we would hear a thud and a yelp.

I remember hearing the first sleigh bells in the road outside our room. We rushed out to see an old Friesland sleigh, with runners that swept up high in a big curve fore and aft, carved and painted with flowers and fruit. The horses were black, with silver bells on their harness. A pretty sight in the snow. We often heard the musical sound.

The Zuyder Zee froze; people went from place to place along the canals at great speed on skates.

In Laren we had a lake called the Rink. No sooner would I be settled painting on a crisp bright morning than the beautiful fair girl, my model, told me what fine weather it was and what a pity to be indoors when the ice was so good. Able to withstand temptation no longer, we went off to the Rink. She walked in clumpen through the snow, carrying

her cloth slippers over which skates were strapped. My ankles needed laced boots to support them.

Christmas season came; the shops were filled with gingerbread and chocolate effigies of "San Nicholas," our old Santa Claus in a different guise. He came of course before Christmas.

On Christmas Day we played our baseball in the snow, although there were only four of us who had stayed on—Raphael, Hinkle, Harold and myself.

All four of us went shopping afterwards; we bought cream tarts, chocolates, wine and other rich delicacies. A grand feast we had sitting round the red-hot tortoise stove in our bedroom. We ate with such appetite after our game that we forgot about the Christmas dinner at the *pension* in the evening, where Vrow Kam had provided turkey and English plum-pudding and dessert. A thaw came next day and the air was muggy, filling the roads with slush. We took a long walk to recover from our indiscretion.

The Herr and Vrow who owned our farm made us a present of a magnificent cake; we gave great offence by offering some of it to their children. "Much too good for them," we were told.

Nearly all the ten children slept together in a cupboard-bed just outside our room in the barn; when the doors were opened in the morning we smelt the air that was let out, even through our own door which was closed.

One evening we heard a fearful uproar. A child had upset an oil lamp in the little boarded-off cubby-hole in the barn where the family lived during the winter. The father picked up a pail of water and flopped it over the blazing oil, and fortunately choked it out—we had seen one farm gutted with fire; it had flamed like a box of matches, in a few minutes nothing but the walls was left.

One night Raphael, Harold and I gave a party to our farmer and his wife. We all sat in our best clothes, so properly, round the table till twelve o'clock. They had never been up so late before. They understood as little of

our conversation as we did of theirs, but we roared at their jokes as if we knew what they were about, just as they did at ours. . . . Our party was a great success.

Raphael was at work on a phenomenally big canvas for the next Salon; the subject: peasants merry-making. Just before we left, I do not know why, he washed the central figure in it with soft soap that completely ruined the painting, or what hope he had of financial reward by those months and months of labour on beans and nuts, till, as he expressed it, his guts went back on him. He could not even afford dinner at the *pension*. We thought he had considerable talent and that much of his work was robust and good. Earnest in the studies he did for the sake of what he could get out of them, giving no thought to a future livelihood, he grudged every penny spent on anything but models and materials.

That we painters should be despised and ignored by the Dutchmen seemed absurd, if only for such an attitude, typical among us.

I had a stiff silk dress with a full skirt, the material silvery set with little flowers, bought at a sale for one and sixpence a yard and made up by myself. Raphael lost his heart to that dress and borrowed it for his model. Just before we were to leave in January, it came back filthy and covered in paint—dilemma—my only evening frock! I scrubbed the paint off with turpentine and bought two gallons of petrol to clean it afterwards out of doors in the frost that had returned; it was colder than ever. Every knuckle on every finger split; I could not move the joints and had to wear gloves for a week. My fingers still bear the scars.

We packed for home—of course we were coming back—Holland was another home. Many trifles were left behind for “next year.”

The last day before taking our boat, Amsterdam looked like some of the very old pictures you see painted of it:

snow on the house roofs and window ledges white against a leaden sky, snow on the rigging and decks of the vessels. Round the black hulls people skated over the greenish grey ice of the frozen canals—The Damracht—that row of ancient gable ends—what a sight it was! And, ugh, how cold! Our clothes seemed no more than tissue paper even when, in the afternoon, the hard cakes of trampled snow on the pavement started to melt at the edges. The thaw had come just in time to spoil the Carnival that was to have been held on the Zuyder Zee that very night, where on the ice even the bonfire was already built to roast an ox whole in celebration of a cold spell, such as had happened in no living memory.

On our boat the heating apparatus had been burst by the frost, which was melting out of our sheets; so wet were they we took them off and slept in our waterproofs.

Since the few days' visit that Darling and Hinkle paid us the following year in Cornwall we have never seen our intimates again. Good-bye to that life of communal enthusiasm. Good-bye to the baseball. In the buying of our boat tickets all was wiped out. What remains indelible is the memory of comradeship—fellowship that animated painter and peasant as we knew them and above all Darling's brilliant and generous help. Like C. H. Mackie he is constantly in my mind. Experience has taught us the truth of much that he then told us.

Where all the pictures are which he painted at Laren, I do not know, some of them I remember as very beautiful, and all bore the stamp of his distinguished vision—it would seem when we knew him that his greatest pleasure was unstinted giving to such students as ourselves. The great Dutch Masters provided the soil tilled by Darling for us, he watered the seeds of our ideas in the fertility of our surroundings. From the bottom of my heart I thank him for what he did for me.

CHAPTER XI

"I THOUT THO' WAS DEĒAD"

WE arranged to hold our second exhibition at the Leicester Galleries late in the year of 1907. Runswick, where we went early that summer, was perpetually shrouded in mist and wet; day after day rain streamed down. A picture Harold painted, from our window, of the bay all blurred and grey was the best that either of us did.

While painting fitful gleams of sun in a landscape, my nose was frost-bitten; they were the only gleams we saw that June.

Uncle Arthur and Sis joined us at Roxby, where we went afterwards. Uncle invented a new language: French pronounced with a Yorkshire accent. Hot water is still *lorchaud* to Harold and me. No one then could have understood our conversation, a mixture from Holland, France, Nottingham and Yorkshire.

A few years before, Aunt West had died quite suddenly, on a path between the syringa bushes in her garden. Uncle had inherited her business. Hewas then searching for a house in England for Sis and himself. A garden too he wanted, in which to cultivate the flowers he loved so passionately.

It was late summer when Uncle and Sis left Roxby. Harold and I went to Staithes to work. We slept at Featherstones, over the post office, we ate in our old studios, a converted stable and loft set on the edge of the sea wall by the Beckmouth.

The weather cleared; I was back on the beach I knew so well. There was no one to say this or that should not be done. A period came when I sensed freedom and growing power.

We were ready for our exhibition, in spite of the disastrous summer, and I had a success with my beach studies.

Late autumn came. So far north it was often too dark

by two o'clock for painting. Gales and mighty seas shook our studio walls, spray fell with thumping swish on the roof and spatting my studio window upstairs.

There was another lantern-lit scene on the beach; cobbles raced still another storm home; another boat was missing. We had been through it all too many times. It was more than we could bear. The telegraph wires were alive that night, in hope that news of the coble might come.

In the morning a kitchen was filled with wailing women; the widow rocked herself back and forth in her chair. Suddenly the door opened, the husband stood there. "What's tho' roaarin' at, lass?" he shouted. Tearing the apron off her head, his wife glared at him for a moment and in an access of rage screamed, "Tho b——r, I thout tho' was deëad."

The boat had landed at Port Mulgrave. There was no telegraph office in that little harbour where the crew had spent the night, too afraid of ghosts to pass Hinderwell Cemetery in the dark.

Our bedroom overlooked the main street; it was terribly noisy when the pubs on either side of us closed; one night we heard a boastful voice shout, "When I walks oop t' b——y street, I'se t'best b——r i' Steers."

All, so glorious before, suddenly seemed sordid. We missed the close companionship of other painters that we had experienced in Holland. We could not contemplate another lonely winter and more tragedies, we were tired of wet and cold; a longing for the warmth and light that we had been assured were in Cornwall came over us.

We cleared up once more. The stove was alight for days, the fuel old canvases. In Harold's stable studio a group he had painted of students and master in the Life room at Nottingham was left hanging from the roof, where it had been screening the light. It was too much trouble to fetch a ladder. Harold in a painting-coat was arranging the model; I in a blue cotton frock with long hair hanging stood behind him—just like both of us.

BOOK III

CHAPTER XII

THE BEER HOUSE

STAITHES had been one of the most vital influences in my life. To turn away from all that it had meant, fearing never to return, hurt me terribly. I hated leaving the moorland and the North Sea, the struggle that made you strong, the wild race of fisher people I loved so well. It was there I had found what I might do.

I remember standing at the door of Harold's studio looking up at the skylight, wishing we had made the effort to take that old picture down. My next recollection is driving along Penzance Promenade in the dark of a November evening. It was high-tide, there was a "bit of sea on," the spray splashed over our cab as we rounded the corner of the harbour. The rain blurred the windows. We could see nothing but blackness through the streaky panes, but the water coming over made us feel at home.

We spent the night at Mount's Bay Hotel. From the windows in the morning we saw Newlyn; the pile of houses in shadow on the hill looked forbidding and grey.

After breakfast we found Stanhope Forbes, who directed us to lodgings in Newlyn and took us to see the work of his students. His studios were set in a large wild garden on the hill slope, all tucked in with fishermen's cottages. Over cement-patched roofs and chimney-pots the harbour and bay were seen.

We were introduced to "Maudie," who played the piano for Mr. Forbes's 'cello; to Ernest Procter, who was then the best man student; to Dod Shaw, his future wife, a charming young thing, with a brilliant complexion, enormous dark eyes and long, slender legs—swift and active as a

gazelle. Ernest was a gangling, long, thin youth; his black hair stood on end. He was a great walker, generally seen with a rucksack pulling his shoulders into a terrific slope from his long neck. We were shown a big picture of Dod's, an orchard, which was very promising. Of Ernest's work I remember lots of sketches and compositions with cupids in them.

Among Mr. Forbes's best students was Charles Walter Simpson, who had a passion for painting horses almost life-size. He was so prodigal with paint, he could be tracked by the colour left on the bushes.

Student life in surroundings such as we had never dreamed of; a carefree life of sunlit pleasure, and leisurely study. I felt old and experienced in comparison with these youngsters, who really knew so much more than I of fun and social graces. Though he was only just over thirty, Harold's hair was already greying; a few white hairs showed at his temples when I first knew him, when he was eighteen.

Newlyn itself was at first a disappointment and Cornwall seemed so pale. After Staithes' cobbled streets the mud was distressing in the harbour roads. The women were not so magnificently upright, they carried no weights on their heads nor did they work among the fishing. In some cases a man's cap was fastened on to an untidy pile of hair with a long hat-pin. Slippers slopped from house to house. In Staithes all the women were stoutly booted.

I was homesick for Staithes, and often begged Harold to go back there, but gradually we came to love Cornwall very dearly. The steep streets were crammed with interest, orchards and patches of garden, ablaze with daffodil and narcissus in the spring were in all sorts of unexpected places, between the houses. In Penzance tropical plants grew that we had never seen before. The harbour at Newlyn was big and full of stout black fishing-boats, each mast white-tipped — a sea-gull's perch.

I soon made friends with fishermen, who knew of us

through our friendship with Jimmy James, the fish auctioneer in Staithes, a Newlyn man.

Our first lodgings at Newlyn had a blank wall close up to the sitting-room window. Our landlady had a bunch of white hairs growing among the eyelashes of her right eye. She was a mournful creature who took pleasure in retailing all the details of her daughter's illness and death.

We made friends and people asked us to their houses and one night we gave a supper-party to Mr. and Mrs. Rheam. Mr. Rheam did not appreciate our Australian wine, such a special treat to us, and the main dish was lobster salad; I had never made one before and did not know you should dry the green stuff, so it turned out more like cold soup than salad.

The Doherty's gave a dance, to which Harold and I went, but we left early, neither of us knew how to waltz. Mrs. Doherty was surprised we would not stay for supper at twelve. We were a trifle priggish and felt superior to people who would stay up all night and think nothing of being tired for painting the next day.

At Christmas Mr. and Mrs. Stanhope Forbes gave a party for their son Alec when I spent most of the evening with Dod Shaw sitting on the balcony watching the dancers on the floor below. We became friends that night and have remained friends ever since. Even at that time she had a precision of speech and a gift of neat phraseology; she had, beside, read a great deal, that made me conscious of being the complete ignoramus Mother said I should be.

My studio was large; it had two skylights. The previous tenant, who must have been very rich, had each day, when cleaning her palette, larded the beams with vast quantities of unused paint. It could all be used again if the skin was peeled off; I did not buy expensive colours, such as cadmium, for a whole year.

My furnishings were a packing-case for a model throne, a sketching-stool and Mother's old Belgian sketching easel, used both out- and indoors ever since she died. The easel

lived till a few years ago, when the hoof of a circus liberty horse gave it the finishing blow.

I delighted in my "Primrose Court" studio; underneath was a vegetable store and an ash-bin; it did not smell too badly. During the years I spent there my work developed out of all recognition. I passed from Dutch influences, through a Joshua Reynolds period of amber colouring and varnish glazes into direct painting. One of the Joshua Reynolds I painted I gave to my uncle; it is not bad, although it was not hung at the Academy when I sent it.

A boy called Willie posed for this picture: a beautiful child in a yellow frock. Unfortunately, he had no roof to to his mouth. To keep him sitting, his sister made him recite over and over again, "A Birdie with a yellow bill." But for his actions, and the way his voice went up and down, no one would have known what he was saying. To amuse him I gave him a hard cake of Indian red water-colour and some paper. That small piece of paint covered more ground than anyone could believe: his face, his hands, his arms, his hair, his dress, the wall behind and the model throne became red like blood in the twinkling of an eye. No more work that morning, nor the day after; not only did he need a bath, but his dress had to be washed as well. The floor and wall never recovered.

Why Willie did not die I cannot think. Each morning he posed he ate six apples, several oranges and a lot of chocolate while I tried to coax him to remain for more than a moment in one particular part of that long room.

People often said to me, "How you must love painting children!"

Willie was one of the principal figures in a six-foot picture, a children's tea-party, which was hung at the Royal Academy the following year; this was not an inspired work and I destroyed it later.

We heard that Mrs. Beer had rooms vacant. From her house the whole stretch of the bay could be seen and grey

Penzance transformed by the changing effects of light into a pearly city, the line of hills beyond, the coast, the sweep of the Lizard Arm and, at night, the wink of the lighthouse.

We went up to see Mrs. Beer. In response to our knocking, the door was opened only an inch; through it two round eyes peered suspiciously. After a few moments she threw the door wide open saying, "You're all right, me dears."

While we were drinking our first tea there, a wagonette filled with people and luggage drove up. There was an awful row in the hallway; we could hear Mrs. Beer screaming denial that she had ever let the rooms to them. She came in afterwards and said, "They wrote to me about the rooms. When I saw them, I wasn't going to have 'em, me dears, Mrs. Beer didn't like the looks of 'em." We were occupying the rooms they had previously booked. What would have happened had Mrs. Beer liked the looks of 'em I do not know.

If Mrs. Beer took a fancy to you there was no end to the trouble she would take; if she did not, there were no lengths to which she would not go to drive you away. She was proud of her voice, which sounded like a ship's siren when she stood at her door ordering stores from the carts on the Harbour road a quarter of a mile away. She told us how, when a girl, she had such a strong jaw that she could bite pins in half to entertain her friends at tea-parties. Mrs. Beer was small, every part of her was round and her grey-white hair skinned back into a little knob at the back.

More than ever we felt the charm of Cornwall when we walked inland. Here too was bleak country, and moorland where short bell-heather grew and ling was rare. Lamorna valley, filled with stunted trees, lay enchanted and ethereal in the opalescent atmosphere.

Many evenings, after dinner, we went up to T. C. Gotch's studio at Trewarveneth to drink coffee and play games. At Gotch's place one evening, a discussion arose as to what everyone would do if they lost all their money. Each had a different plan. Harold said, "We would go on

doing just what we are doing." No one knew we had nothing at the time.

We had never led so full a social life. All the gaiety I had missed in youth came suddenly; work had never been attacked with greater zest, we had never felt more confident, in spite of periods of money shortage. One day when we thought all our funds were gone I found half a sovereign in the pocket of the jacket I was wearing—I had thought it only a sixpenny piece as I felt its milled edge with my thumb-nail as we sat talking. Harold still says when we are short of money, "Search your pockets."

Mrs. Beer, suspecting we were in difficulties, would say, "Me dears, I've a sovereign or two put by that you shall have." We never did borrow from her, but that did not lessen our gratitude.

I did the mending and made all my own clothes. A performance of "Cranford" was given by the Forbes's students in which several of my lilac prints from Frankie Seymour's took part. Frills covered the wide skirts, the bodices were tight fitting, a style of my own. Harold often used my frocks for his models. His picture "Reading a Letter," now in Leeds City Art Gallery, is a good portrait of Phyllis Gotch, who posed in a blue silk taffeta dress of mine.

Mrs. Gotch was a great hostess; she gave a regal air to any studio party. Mr. Gotch, although he remained in the background, was equally perfect. His studio was turned upside down for us to dance and play in. I can see him now among a mess of parcels of food piled on tables and chairs in the dining-room, beating a mayonnaise with violence, his pale blue eyes snapping with rage, no one taking any notice as he repeated, "Phyllis, I will have no such party in my house!" The angrier he got the thicker and smoother the mayonnaise became. The unconventional dinner that Phyllis had planned took place just the same. When at about two o'clock the guests started to leave, Harold asked Mr. Gotch how he felt. His answer was, "My spirits are starting to rise."

I spent the summer on the beach in Newlyn, making life-size studies for the picture that is now at the Laing Art Gallery, Newcastle-on-Tyne. In it I painted Staithes rather than Newlyn. I had a big success at the Academy of 1909 with my picture "The Beach." On Private View Day Mrs. Asquith was overheard to say, "Who is this Laura Knight?"

I did water-colours too that year. Two years ago I saw one in Lancashire that caused me no feeling of shame.

I submitted drawings to the Old Water-Colour Society and was elected an associate. I went to London to receive my Diploma, and stayed with Mary and Ernest Gillick. I found Mary waiting outside the Gallery, afraid I should not find my way back to Chelsea; it looked like being a real pea-souper fog. Snow lay thick and more was coming—a murky theatrical London seen through those feather-like flakes spinning down, so brilliant close to the electric standards. I could not leave without trying to put on record how wonderful it was. I sent a telegram to Harold not to expect me back, and went to buy paint-box, easel, paper, etc., quite a costly outfit. A pair of goloshes too I purchased. Thaw came in the night, my marvellous fog had dispersed in the morning; by the roadside the dirty snow was piled in heaps, the pavement covered with slush, and a biting east wind had risen. Undeterred, I set up my easel on the Embankment, just outside the Gillick's flat, and stayed there all day, despite the cold and having to hold my easel with one hand and paint with the other, but I finished my large water-colour, in which a scarlet pillar-box was a prominent feature.

Next day was frosty, but I did another picture. I can never forget the torment of fatigue—such a lot of detail of twigs and windows. I was too tired to stop and face packing up; Ernest's studio, only a block distant seemed a hundred miles away, I could scarcely get there, my legs would not work. . . .

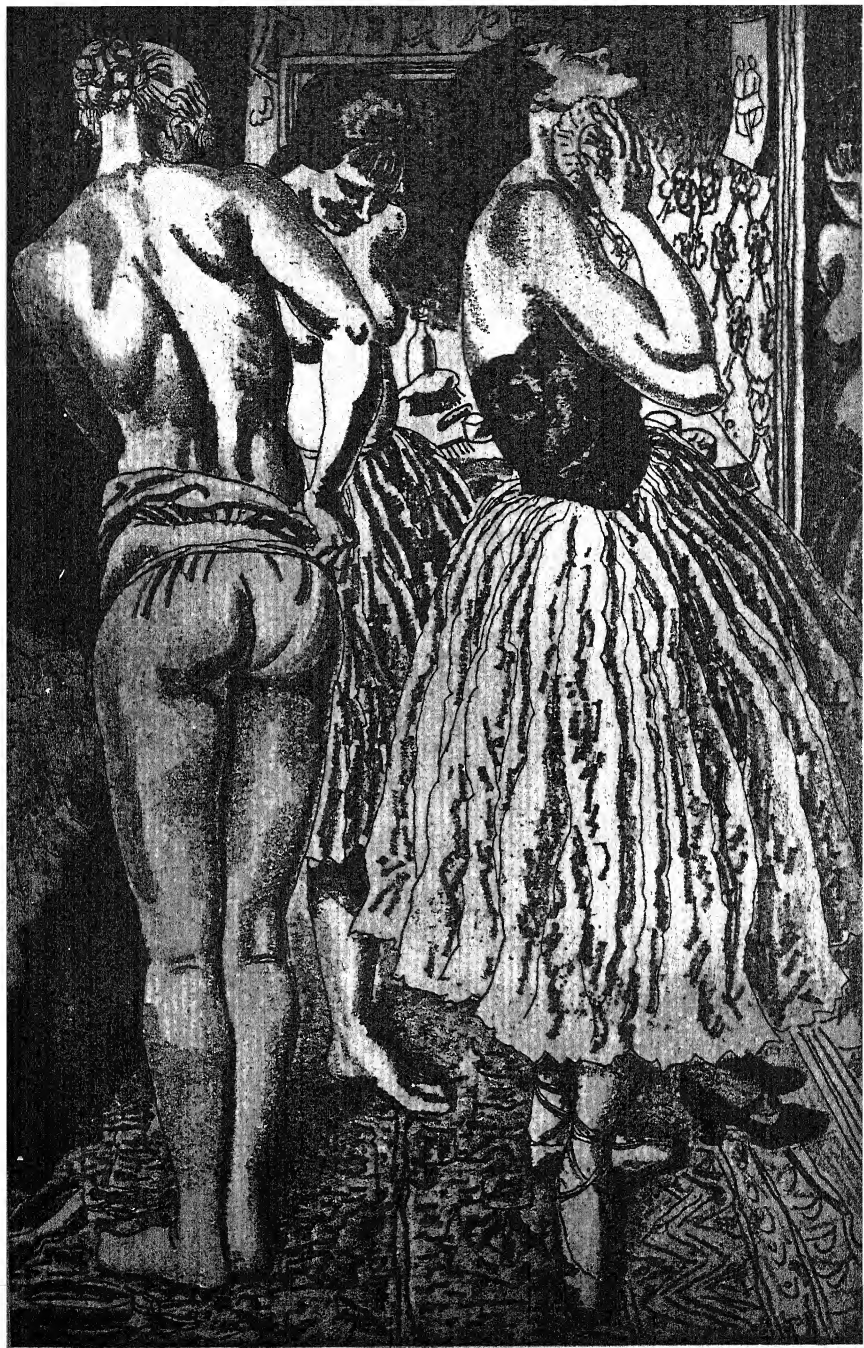
That night I travelled home third-class, and slept on a seat.

Harold in his studio on Newlyn Cliff was painting Mr. J. G. Lyon's portrait, who bought both pictures for twenty pounds each. One he presented to the Leeds Art Gallery.

Before any other painter knew where his pictures were hung in the Academy, I heard from Mary Gillick. Her charwoman's husband, a night watchman, had come home one morning and told his wife, "There is a portrait of our pillar-box hanging on the line at the Royal Academy." The "Pillar-box" was again shown in London this year, 1935, at the Tate Gallery.



POWDER AND PAINT
(*Aquatint*)
1924



THREE GRACES OF THE BALLET (*Aquatint*) 1927

CHAPTER XIII

THE MYRTAGE

THE winter marked an epoch when once again I became aware of latent power. Daring grew, I would work only in my own way. An even greater freedom came—glorious sensation, promise for a future when anything might be attempted.

The same year as the "Pillar-box" I had two big successes, both six-foot pictures. One was a crowd of boys bathing and dressing in an upturned boat in Newlyn Harbour, and the other, children flying a kite on the hill behind the Beer house. I did a six-foot study out in the wind for that landscape. Every house, farm and field was put in and modelled so that Joey Carter Wood would know which it was; each patch of plough and grass and heather was familiar to him for miles, and the hills, too, beyond. Big studies were done out of doors of every detail for both pictures. I hurled myself in extraordinary abandon on the actual canvases in my loft over the vegetables and ash-bin. In these pictures I put to account what I had begun to learn in Staithes of sunlight and of figures in action, to which study closer observation in Cornwall had been added.

George Clausen bought "The Kite" for Cape Town Art Gallery before the Royal Academy Private View Day. Hugh Lane bought "Boys" for Johannesburg Art Gallery. I am told it has suffered terribly there through being hung in the powerful sunlight which streams through an un-screened window. I had met Hugh Lane, when Harold and I were up in London on a trip from Staithes. I remember the exact wording of the letter I received from him in reference to a little picture exhibited at the Dublin Academy:

"I have won a prize in the Art Union. The price you have on your picture is rather more than I am getting. In view of my many debts, I do not feel justified in adding to them. Will you accept the amount of my prize?" I believe it was twelve pounds. He gave no address on his letter, I did not then know who Hugh Lane was!

Our old friend Oliver Sheppard was over from Dublin on a visit. We were lunching with him at the Monico that day, I took the letter to ask if Oliver knew anything about this Hugh Lane. I was in the act of writing down his name and address when Oliver exclaimed:

"Sure, there is himself and Orpen!"

We all had lunch together. It was the first time I had met Orpen.

A. J. Munnings told how Orpen described his impression that day. These were A. J.'s words:

"Orpen said Laura was lovely. That was funny," A. J. continued, "I never thought you were lovely!"

In the heart of Newlyn an old Georgian house remained intact, surrounded by a garden and myrtle trees. Its half-circle bay-windows and fine proportions had great distinction.

In it four girl students lived. They were the *élite*. Among them were Dod Shaw and Friniwid Tennyson Jesse. Mrs. Shaw, Dod's mother, presided over the group. Friniwid was slender and graceful like a wand, her hair was auburn. They talked literature, some wrote tales and poems, some did woodcuts, some painted. Some did all three. They dressed in tussore silk, browns and art colours. Some even changed the names they were christened by. Myrtle Cottage became the "Myrtage." They discussed their best features and how to sit to show them to advantage.

The Myrtage was the centre of aesthetic culture. One day it came to the ears of our particular set that the advent of a Miss Waters, a friend of A. J. Munnings, a horsy young man, was causing a change. There were tales of the Myrtage

sending to Norwich for face-creams and other aids to artificial beauty and smartness. It was whispered that noses were being powdered and lipstick applied—even eyelash cream! Flowing garments were set aside and replaced by others of a more dashing cut—such was the influence of Miss “Still” Waters, as she was christened.

Ernest Procter after a short absence, returned. He came to the Beer house on Saturday evening to unburden his woe. He had been the pivot of a group of delicate young ladies, now transformed into horsy women . . .

We thought scandal had reached its height when, at a dance, Miss Waters appeared in a white ballet dress. Such things were not done, particularly as she took away all our partners—she was so fascinating.

There were dreadful tales about A. J. Munnings: how he sometimes wore a horse-coper’s suit made of a check material, with collar and pocket lapels of black velvet—of the hunting-songs he sang and the brews of punch made at men’s parties at Chyoone, the farm opposite to Trewarveneth. When it was whispered that a certain young man had actually got tight at one of these, it was as if Newlyn could never get over the disgrace.

One day Harold and I were returning from a visit to Lamorna. Just by old Frankie Pollard’s gate was a noisy group: the centre of it, a stranger to us, was a young man with pale face and light brown hair combed forward, who might have sat for a Bobbie Burns portrait. His fine figure was clothed in a shepherd’s plaid suit, the trousers were close-fitting, belling out at the foot. He was A. J. Munnings, all round him were the Myrtage girls.

We met him again a few evenings later, when Percy Sharman, the fiddler, brought him to a musical party in Trewarveneth studio. A. J. took complete control of the entertainment and taught us the choruses of his hunting-songs which he sang with extraordinary vigour and sense of rhythm, making it impossible not to join in with all our might. He recited “The Raven”—never had I come across

such overwhelming vitality. I could not take my eyes off him. He was the stable, the artist, the poet, the very land itself! He had seen "The Beach" at the Royal Academy, and he was boundless in his admiration for it. It was real sunlight that I had represented. How had it been painted? Where had I made the studies? I can remember his praises that piled one on another. I adored everything about him. Harold, not so impulsive as I, stood aloof, withholding his judgment—fighting our new friend's irresistible charm.

CHAPTER XIV

THEATRICAL ADVENTURE

THE Beer house might well have been called the "Bear Garden." We led poor old Mrs. Beer a dance and she loved it. She used to scream at us and we screamed at her—the noise was terrible every morning when she put a wet sponge down Joey Carter Wood's neck to wake him and make him get up. She was always glad when we came back after an absence, and once she said, "I've felt that miserable all the time you've been away. It's that quiet and I miss the music!" Up till then we had been conscience-stricken about our nightly band.

Joey Carter Wood played Scotch airs and popular tunes on the penny whistle. He had both good ear and voice. Thompson used paint brushes as drumsticks to play on two empty biscuit-tins, kettledrums to us. Harold provided the big drum by beating his fist on the canvas of a big life study left behind by a former lodger, which picture was used in summer to hide the empty fire-grate. I hummed through a tissue-covered comb. We rehearsed our orchestra nearly every night, and generally stopped at two o'clock in the morning out of consideration for Mrs. Beer, who slept in the adjoining room. Apparently we need not have bothered!

There were two "John" drawings in our room left by their owner in lieu of rent. Most of Mrs. Beer's treasures were piled up underneath her bed; they included boxes full of books, which were no good to her, for she could not read. We always laughed to see her on Sunday afternoon, washed and shining, with her hair slicked back tighter than ever, dressed in her best black, sitting in the kitchen with a Bible in her hands; like as not it was upside down—she did not know the difference.

Unexpected guests arrived one evening, I found when I went home early. I saw Mrs. Beer chasing a chicken round the garden; it was not apparently aware that she had cut off its head with her carving-knife. Hers was the happiest and merriest house in all Newlyn and just full enough to be comfortable.

One day after work Harold and I found A. J. Munnings comfortably settled in one of our armchairs. He just said, "Mrs. Beer's let me a bedroom and says I can share your sitting-room and have meals with you." We were taken aback. Harold received the news coldly. I did not know if they were going to like each other. However, A. J.'s company there was a great acquisition, and we joined in the walks he loved.

We went one tramp with him across country to Castle Andinus, where the foundations of the prehistoric village are. A lovely day, fair as fair, across the great chequered sweep of land, half cultivated, half wild, the shadow of one solitary cloud, a dark blot unchanging in shape crept slowly over the spread below us. The horizon line of the sea rose high behind. We read on the graveyard wall of some farmer buried on the height: "Virtue only consecrates the ground."

Sitting to rest at the top of a steep meadow we saw a fox loping along by the hedge before he turned into a spinney below. Five or ten minutes afterwards an old spaniel came nosing along, following his tracks. "Look at the old dog," said A. J. roaring with laughter. Strangely enough A. J. had never seen a live fox before—he had always hunted with deer-packs, when a tame deer was taken in a van to be let loose for the chase. A. J. said the animal enjoyed the run and knew the game as well as the hunters and hounds.

Sometimes others joined us on these walks. Dod Shaw and A. J. would jump the Cornish hedges, Dod displaying her fine legs. "Just look at Dod's legs; she's got the best legs any gal ever had," A. J. would exclaim.

Benjy Leader, a painter, son of Leader of Victorian fame,

lent us his furnished cottage on the hill by Lamorna Gate. Harold wanted to paint in the valley and I to work on the rocks with a figure model, where very few visitors then came. The cliffs, rocks and sea were fine to paint with figures bathing and swimming in the pools or dressing and undressing—I wanted particularly to study the nude out of doors.

We put two London models in the cottage adjoining our own. They had never been in the country before, scarcely knew a sheep from a cow and thought cabbages grew on trees. It was pandemonium: the girls were not able to cook, so raucous shrieks came constantly from our kitchen, and every night the village boys made cat-calls under their bedroom window next to ours.

Our housekeeper sprained her ankle on the second day, and sent for her relations to come and stay to help her. With them they brought her baby, which child became a permanent inhabitant. One hot afternoon later on, when painting a large canvas in the field opposite, our housekeeper's voice shouted over the hedge, "Mrs. Knight, Mrs. Paynter's come." Covered with paint from head to foot, hot and anxious, I had to drop palette and brushes. Mrs. Paynter, immaculate in cool linen received me. I showed her into our sitting-room, where I found the baby, wrong end upwards, squeezing black paint from a large tube all over the carpet. "Is that your little girl?" Mrs. Paynter asked sweetly.

Both models had beautiful figures, the fair girl's was a revelation; I never saw such grace as when the wind blew her cotton frock round her limbs. One day when she and I were walking up the lane, and I was watching her, hoping to memorise her line, she stopped to pick some honeysuckle from the hedge. I asked her if she loved the perfume. "Yes," she said; "it smells just like So-and-so's shaving soap," mentioning a man we all knew.

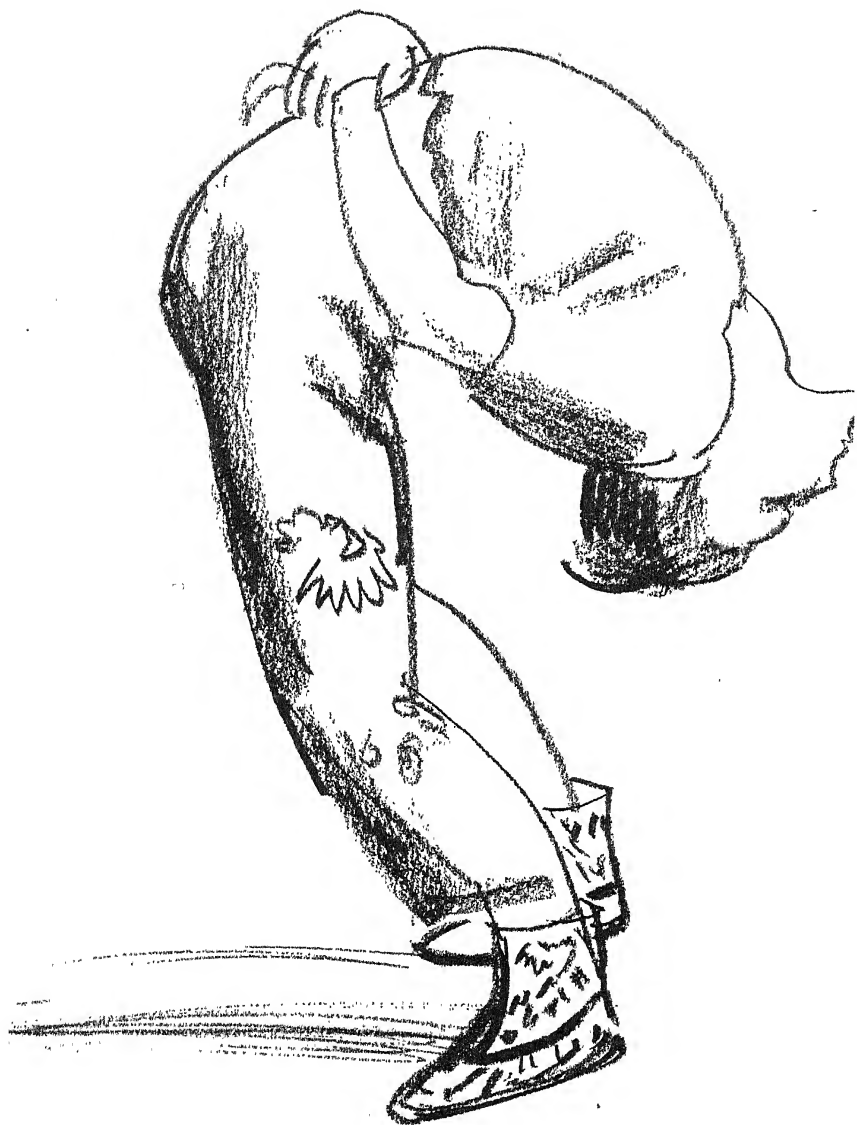
I climbed along the cliff-edge and over slippery rocks every day carrying six-foot canvases on my head. It seems to me now almost a superhuman feat to have carried them so far. I was always afraid of being blown over on windy

days; the canvas acted as a sail—I always held it ready to let go if too fierce a gust came.

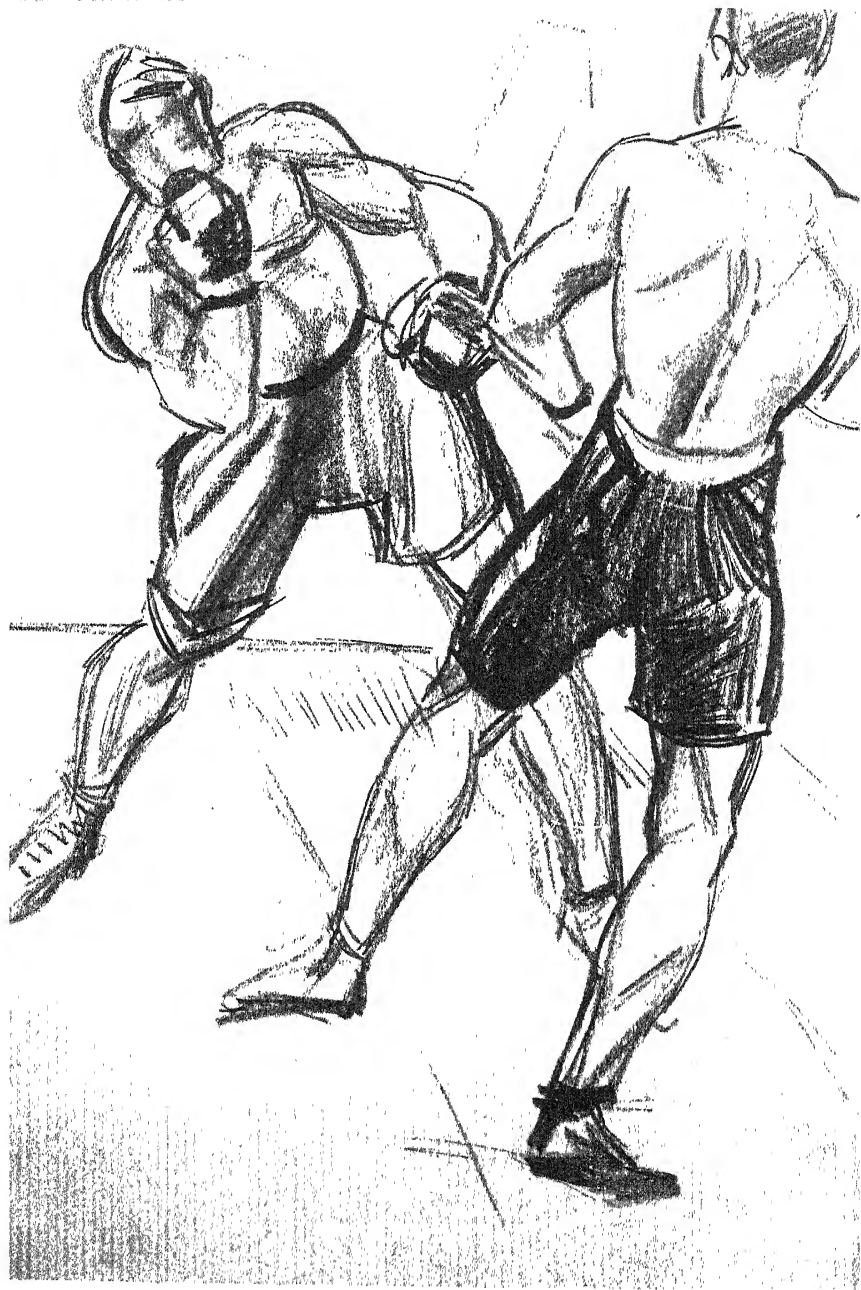
All the studies were not finished for “Daughters of the Sun” which I was planning when our cottage troubles became too much and the two models were packed off in a hurry, a heartbreaking disaster. I used other models, but my honeysuckle girl really inspired that big picture, carried out the following winter in a studio on Newlyn cliff. Two enormous canvases of that subject were done; the first one did not satisfy me and was destroyed. Reversing the usual methods of painting sunlight, I made the direct light cool and almost colourless; in the reflections from the rocks into the flesh shadow, fullest warmth and colour was given. It was exhibited at the Royal Academy, the effect extraordinarily glowing. On its account I had there a *succès d’estime*, but not financially; I received an offer of three hundred pounds for it—to accept so great a reduction of the original price would have been an indignity.

During the War “Daughters of the Sun” went the rounds of provincial Galleries, and as a result became so badly damaged there was no hope of repairing it. It had been left out with the rain beating on its back, perhaps for weeks, perhaps for months; when it eventually came back to me it had split all over, the paint was lifted from the cloth and its handsome swept frame almost crumbled away. I had not the heart to destroy the picture then; I kept it for years face to the wall. Not long ago, in a ruthless mood, I cut it into unrecognisable strips that more than filled my ash-bin. I felt a murderer.

Phyllis Gotch would organise extraordinary parties. It was difficult to resist her persuasive powers; I have already told how her father found it impossible. She came to the Beer house one day full of a plan she had made. I was ironing one of my print frocks in the hot kitchen after a hard morning’s work on the beach; my arms were blistered by the fierce sun and I was ashamed to be caught with such a



THE CHINESE BACKBENDER
1932



BOXING
1932

red face. Phyllis announced that she had completed arrangements for a grand display—all the guests were invited—it was to take place in four days' time—an evening party was to be given on Trewarveneth lawn—she had seen the mothers of about twenty village children who had promised they would allow their girls to come as a Grecian dancing chorus and Phyllis and I were to be principals. Phyllis had studied solo dancing, but I never had a lesson in my life.

Under pressure, I consented to rehearse. Those four days were a nightmare of fatigue, going through the steps and poses till we were fit to drop. The evening of the party came. I arrived in good time, dressed in some sort of straight garment fixed with gold braid, to find a crowd of chemise-clad children assembled in Phyllis's bedroom, where she was busy putting rouge on their cheeks and black on their eyelashes. The guests had assembled more than an hour before Phyllis was ready. I can see her now in front of her looking-glass, comb in hand scratching her hair into a Grecian shape, all her drapery ravelled round her feet. Outside a heavy dew was falling—the waiting audience was cold and hungry and the children were sneezing, grumbling and crying behind the bushes. Some went home, others insisted on putting on their black country shoes and stockings.

Phyllis and I did our dance on the tree-bordered lawn. The gramophone had to be put inside the studio because of the damp; we could not hear it. The children did nothing but stand round and cry.

To me, the only consolation was that no one could see us clearly. The torches Charles Walter Simpson and Garnet Wolseley held were too wet to light. The Chinese lanterns hanging in the trees behaved in their usual temperamental way. But for the starlight we should have been invisible. That particular year the stars were exceptionally brilliant and had a habit of darting in a flash right across the sky.

Mr. Gotch lent a pair of scarlet tights out of his prop box for Garnet Wolseley to wear, who spent the evening screening his nether limbs behind chairs. Charles Walter wore

green ones, but he was quite bold; in them he did an imitation of Maud Allan's Salome dance, the decapitated head represented by a cushion—such a flailing of limbs, in all seriousness, I never saw.

Phyllis took us by storm on yet another occasion. Had she been a General she could have led millions to death and glory for a hopeless cause. This time we were to act, sing and dance in a hash-up of musical comedies, which affair was to be held at the Church School Hall at Newlyn. I put my foot down and refused to be a principal. Part of the "Geisha" was included, and the prettiest girls in Newlyn formed the chorus carrying Chinese lanterns, which they set down in front of them on the stage when the concertina paper part folded up, to leave the bare candles exposed.

Mrs. Rogers carried off the show, singing saucy songs and doing high kicks—she had been in panto before she settled in Newlyn. The platform was high so the kicks looked very effective, particularly in the front seats. No one knew their parts—the pianist failed to turn up owing to a tiff. Frank Heath was called up from the audience to read the score, a brave show on his part—leaves of music kept dropping and the pencilled instructions were impossible to follow.

I was an "English Visitor" off a boat, in a white linen dress and a captain's peaked cap that had belonged to Mrs. Beer's husband. I could not keep from laughing, for my companion, Barry Bennetts, a solicitor and famous footballer from Penzance had a make-up so ridiculous, that of a girl's, the only one he had been able to get hold of. He had outsize in eyes and eyelashes at any time.

When the show was over Mr. Forbes came up and said, looking at my heavy make-up; "It's a good thing the members of the Old Water-Colour Society can't see you now!" It was just after I had been elected.

Life was going with a swing, and we had health and strength for hard work and for play. We became dancing maniacs; every evening the old gramophone we had hired from Heard's in Penzance was turned on; it sounded like

a bundle of tin kettles being clashed together in a grinding mill. We finally bought an expensive new one with an enormous wooden horn and lots of new records.

Now there was no shortage of cash; both of us were doing well and I could sell nearly everything I touched, an exhilarating experience. I could go a-bust on canvases and paints. New tubes and boxes were stacked high in my studio and I had every kind of good brush that was made and sometimes as many as three London models posing at the same time. I wasted dozens of yards of canvas and paper without counting the cost.

During the summer after "The Kite" and "Boys" had been exhibited: I was doing a two days' sketch on the rocks by Lamorna, three models were posing, I was squeezing paint out of the tube straight on to the canvas, when interrupted by a man who said patronisingly, "Excuse me, but your work reminds me a little of Laura Knight's. Did you see her pictures in the Academy this year?" I just said, "Yes," and went on working. I had to prevent my models from running after him to tell him what a clever man he was.

CHAPTER XV

TILLERS

THE Gotches built a new house and we left Mrs. Beer to go to Trewarveneth, where there was a lovely garden. Both Harold and I had other studios; that at Trewarveneth we used as a living-room. In it Dolly Snell and I used to practise ballet exercises; she taught me to go on the points and kick the back of my head; she had been trained at Tillers and was one of the best models I ever had. She eventually married Harold's brother Edgar.

I constantly made drawings of Dolly in positions and movement. While we were at Acacia Road Dolly had another's term's lessons at Tillers. I paid for one for myself, but instead of dancing I drew.

Degas would have liked to work in such a room as that used for the class. It was about forty feet long and had many windows down one side that overlooked the Charing Cross Road. The resin on the floor had been shuffled in by thousands of feet; it reflected the dancing figures as if the boards were wet. Every inch of the wall-space was covered with photographs and prints of dancers who had been trained there; a drawing of mine was added to them when I left.

An old Italian lady took the classes. Now and again she picked up her black skirt to do some neat steps, showing her knobbly feet in an old pair of shoes, the heels worn over. When completely exhausted she retired behind a screen and we heard the chink of glass against glass. The students were dressed in old stage ballet frocks of every colour, some spangled and torn, one or two white ones stood out ethereally. On the chairs by me sat the mothers, sad, dark and bulky in comparison with the slender youth of the

dancers. A scene of indescribable loveliness and character, typifying the stage, the panto, the chorus. I was crazy with delight.

The old Italian lady was extremely suspicious of me; she was convinced I was there to make notes of her steps for my own use, perhaps as a teacher, and she tried hard to make me join the classes as a dancer.

While we were living in Cornwall we always went to London for some months every year. We often spent both afternoon and evening at the theatres and would come away only when we had seen every play that was running. Whenever Genée was dancing at the Empire we went many times.

I wanted to go behind the scenes to work, so I pulled strings and obtained a pass through the stage-door at the Empire. I do not remember what was being played, but Kyasht was at the height of her fame. I think it was Phyllis Bedells's first important engagement and Fred Farren was dancing as an apache. I wonder if Phyllis Bedells remembers now how delightful she was to me—the girl with the sketch-book. I do not suppose she even knew my name. I ceased to go there because someone—I do not know who he was—took to sharing my seat in the prompter's box. Maybe he thought he was assisting me by keeping his arm round my waist, but I found it embarrassing and distracting.

I first saw Pavlova dancing with Mordkin. During another season, at the Palace Theatre, when her partner was Novikov, so thrilled was I, I never missed a show; she held me to such a degree that I became almost completely absorbed in her art. I knew her every step and gesture in every dance she did; her biggest popular successes were "La Mort du Cygne" and "Bacchanal." The house became electrified directly she stepped on the *green*, for although as a dancer she was inimitable, it was as Cecchetti told me years later: "Pavlova has that about her, she only need come on to the stage and hold out her hand. . . ."

While the rest of the show was on, I drew everything: the proscenium, the house, the performers. I then got a knowledge of the construction of it all, and the lighting effects: the reflection from the stage on to the gilded cupids and flamboyant ornament of the boxes; the blackish richness of the red plush curtains, the shadow inside forming a background for the light flesh of women's bare necks and arms, the white gloves and men's waistcoats and shirt-fronts, the black of their coats' outline lost in the darkness, and how the shadows from the spot limes interlaced in strange patterns on the stage boards, and the circles of light were edged with polychromatic colour. The crimson drop curtain glowed scarlet below where lit by the footlights, and darkened above in gradation to wine colour and blue mystery of immense length of fold. The curtain itself always had a tremendous fascination for me, not only for all it covered or disclosed, but for its own loveliness' sake: its billowing lines when seen from a box close to the stage; the ruthless inevitability with which its weight swung down, and the gold corded fringe at the bottom edge spreading this way and that; above all, that vague outline of a figure behind, pushing to make a parting for an artiste to take a call, one of the most entrancing parts of a performance. Never was greater sensation than when Pavlova took her call; nor could anyone that I have ever seen so completely give herself to her beloved Public as did she: right leg forward, knee bent, foot at right angle, her left leg stretched out behind, toe pointed down; her head on its long curved neck reached nearly to the ground, as if in complete abandon of gratitude for her reception. Her whole back could be seen from the front, and on either side her arms stretched, as if suspended, so weightless and gracious were they.

Arthur Prince was also on the Palace Programme: I told him last year when I met him at the Magicians' Dinner that I had seen him every day for three months. Grock was also on the Bill, and every time I laughed as much as I had done the first time; he was then little known here—his first visit

to England. What a clown! His work had spontaneity and freshness that always took me by surprise, although I knew his show by heart. One night a soprano came on for the first time, and after singing a few notes, stopped dead and stood as if petrified with fright. . . . The Conductor played the prelude over again, still she stood just staring, not able to utter a sound—then suddenly turned and raced off. She was never on the Bill again, as far as I know.

I could have gone back-stage to work, for I had a pass for all over the theatre, but that time my interest was in front, and beside, I used to dread most terribly the ordeal of passing any stage door-keeper, his suspicion and cross-examination. I remember going some years later to a theatre where I was not known: the man at the stage door refused even to glance at my permit; he said, "You may think you are going down on to the Stage, but I tell you, you aren't, you'll not get past that door!" And while we still stood glaring at each other, I wondering how long I could tolerate his attitude, Gregoriev came in and asked me why I was waiting. I never felt more like putting my tongue out than at that moment as I *swept out* past the creature and went through the door.

Harold's brother came over from America to stay with us in Cornwall. We had not seen him since he was a boy. He had done everything that adventurers do, from being an apprentice on a ship to a chef in a big restaurant, saving up money for gold-prospecting and mining.

Edgar with enthusiasm joined in our dancing, he and I practised crude acrobatics. Once when he was spinning with me on his shoulder, I slipped and was hurled right out flat on my stomach; for a moment I thought I should die, but there were no ill effects. Dolly and I were "turning ourselves out" at an improvised bar one morning when A. J. Munnings, who was lodging in the other rooms at Trewarveneth, walked in.

"What are you doing?" A. J. asked.

"We are exercising," I replied.

"Why don't you do some natural exercises like dumb-bells or Indian clubs?" he said scornfully.

We became so healthy and strong that we could almost run up Paul Hill, which mounts five hundred feet in half a mile. My powers of endurance were phenomenal and in spite of all our play I worked like a maniac.

Before Phyllis Gotch went to South Africa she and I had raked the shops in Penzance and the bargain counters in London for original stuffs to make into striking dresses. Even furnishing materials were used if the pattern were bold and bright enough.

One of my most successful evening gowns was made with the help of Susie Chirgwin in the little white dining-room where Mr. Gotch had mixed his mayonnaise. This dress was of emerald green stiff silk; it had a tight-laced bodice, the skirt spread at the hem into a great width, the grandest dress for a picture. I determined to paint Dolly in it with a short black velvet coat that had been altered for me from a dinner-jacket Harold ordered and had never worn; it was too conspicuous for his taste.

I ordered a canvas 7 feet 6 inches by 5 feet from Newman's. It came and was a beautiful surface and on a Sunday morning when everyone else was larking with a ball in Trewarveneth garden, I laid out and stretched the canvas on the studio floor.

It was early October; any moment the lovely weather might break. I wanted to do the most work possible on the first day, so for the sake of being able to cover the ground quickly, I first cleaned the canvas with turps, then poured a bottle of linseed oil over it and rubbed off the surplus with a rag.

The next day the canvas was in lovely condition; the oil had stiffened. At eight o'clock we started work in one of the fields. A wind had sprung up in the night; the weather was changeable, and at about ten o'clock it settled to solid grey. I had hoped for sunlight. Dolly was to be turned round as

the light worked into the west, with the idea of a final effect of her walking across the canvas, in shadow except for her edges, with a late afternoon sky as a background. That idea had to be scrapped and I decided to paint in a grey scheme.

Edgar had fixed the stretcher firmly on six poles, roping all down to stakes to keep the framework solid, but the canvas bellied in and out in the breeze. All the precise drawing and modelling had to be done with my palette shoved hard against the cloth to hold it still. I painted with no medium and my oil foundations worked like a dream, getting slightly tacky as the day proceeded.

Dolly behaved heroically. In imagination I see her standing like a stoic, hour after hour, my black hat with its green feather on her head; on her face a Mona Lisa expression, the mysterious smile that everyone admired so much. We were all in the tensest state, otherwise we could not have gone through the strain, but Dolly had the hardest task; she did not have the excitement of painting. Edgar made black coffee hourly, which we sipped as we stood—there were no rests. At one o'clock Edgar brought out bread and cheese; we sat down in the meadow for about five minutes to eat.

While sitting there, the heavy clouds broke apart, showing an intense bright blue. I had the whole canvas covered by that time and was well away with my reserved scheme of colour. I toyed with my paint for a while, hoping the sky would grey over again—it was hopeless, so I pulled myself together and changed the whole effect over to sunlight; this meant complete reconsideration and repainting of every part, for the sunlight was intense.

At half-past five I downed tools and cleaned up the mess. Even my hair was coated with paint. I brought the canvas into the studio; it was practically finished. We sat in chairs for the first time, but not for long. There were scores of brushes to gather and wash which had been flung all over that part of the field where we had worked. I used nearly three pounds of flake white that day; Edgar squeezed

it out for me as he saw it disappear from my palette, now and again handing me a clean one.

The next morning I looked at my picture, and found it good—"Let there be Knight and there was Knight!" Only Dolly's hands, covered with white gloves, needed a touch or two to make the drawing of them more precise.

The weather had broken, half a gale was blowing, it had turned cold and showery. The canvas and poles were once more set up; the ropes, stones and stakes were added to until they looked like the rigging of a ship. In spite of all this, Edgar had to hang on to the bar at the back of the canvas to prevent its being blown away. Dolly could not keep the hat on, the full green skirt blew over her head, but before the rain came down, half an hour later, I managed to complete the work. I did not touch the picture again, except to sign my name.

Harold did not approve of my extraordinary feats; I ran the risk of making myself ill, he said.

"It is a brilliant piece of work, but it is a pity that you cannot write on it that it was painted in one day."

A complete reaction set in afterwards, lasting for three weeks—until we went again to London. During those weeks I could not abide the thought of ever taking up a brush again. I had not felt that way before in my life.

We were to go up to London on account of another exhibition at the Leicester Galleries. There Harold showed his first "modern life" interiors. I had a number of small ballet sketches and water-colours of figures out of doors, covering yards of paper. Mr. Ernest Brown was delighted when he saw the work we brought.

From what I remember of the pictures I exhibited, they were an expression of *joie de vivre* from which I was suffering. An ebullient vitality made me want to paint the whole world and say how glorious it was to be young and strong and able to splash with paint on canvas any old thing one saw, without stint of materials or oneself, the result of a year or two of vigour and enjoyment. That particular season the sun had

blazed unveiled in the sky. Looking across the field in the late afternoon—where I had worked with my models most of the summer—the meadow-grass was dark gold as you looked into the eye of the low sun glowing behind the trees of Chyoone, mistily black against the clear sky above, subtly graduated from warmth, through the rainbow range, to coolness overhead.

Here confession of a foolishness is unavoidable. Ever since my singing lessons with Miss Gutjahr, sole consolation for life in Nottingham, I had been subject to bouts of indulgence in this art. I loved Schubert and Schumann, and I loved making a noise.

Early that year Blanche Thomas had come to Newlyn to study with Mr. Forbes, and when I heard her lovely voice my disease broke out afresh and lessons with her were arranged. Edith Stapley and Tommy Fielden helped me with the piano. I made life trying for everyone, though Harold encouraged me to go on. That year I had practised and painted as hard as two people in one. Life was too short—it held so many wonderful possibilities!

The year before the Gotches moved into their new house, during a visit of A. J.'s he, the Gotches, Harold and I decided that the following winter we must have a Dickens Christmas. We would all eat at Trewarveneth and pool expenses. We would hold open house and make all friends welcome whenever they came—on special days give parties during the festivities which were to last through Christmas and over New Year's Day.

Preparations started fourteen days in advance. We stole holly from the woods and fields and hung festoons of it all round the stone walls of the studio. The grand piano was pushed on one side. We polished the floor; having done that we started dancing and held parties every evening just as if Christmas had already arrived.

After tea every day A. J. read Dickens—the *Christmas Carol*, *Pickwick*, delightful hours when we could all sleep peacefully.

It was a glorious holiday, full of fun. Dickens reigned over all, and A. J. carried him and the entertainment on his back.

One night he was reciting "The Raven" with much drama in the big studio, lit by firelight. He came to the part:

"And suddenly there came a rapping,
A rapping on my chamber door,"

and at that instant a violent rapping did sound on our studio door, most effectively! We were all terrified—the garden outside had the reputation of being haunted. It was only Mr. Jorey, who had been kept waiting overlong and wanted our guests to go back home to Lamorna, "in Albert." Albert was the pony. You never asked to be taken anywhere in the trap, but just "Can we go in Albert?"

In the daytime during our Dickens Christmas we went long walks across country, when we were almost too tired to crawl over walls and across ditches. On Boxing Day we followed the hounds on foot. Everyone who has an animal they can stride goes to Penzance Meet on that occasion, a spectacle of unconventional costumes and mounts. That Boxing Day A. J. was excited and boisterous; he made such a noise that he was called to order by the Master, Mr. Bolitho, in not too polite a way.

We had wine for our dinner-parties, but everyone was abstemious—we got drunk on gaiety and lemonade. Mr. Gotch, a typical Van Dyck figure, would turn to each guest and say, "Mr. So-and-so, may I take wine with you?" A. J. one night started a speech by saying, "We are all wonderful people." He made a chorus that we all sang, "For we are wonderful people." We thought we were.

One morning, at about four o'clock when the party was at its height, I was found fast asleep on the rolled up carpet underneath the grand piano, with A. J. roaring out his songs and vamping overhead. It was the one spot in the building where I could find a little peace, so was very annoyed when my hiding-place was discovered.

Towards the end of these celebrations Harold and I had a

dreadful scene in the Rat Run, a short-cut to the Beer house. It ran along the top of a Cornish wall; at night you had to go carefully, otherwise you might roll down the sloping walls into a field. Groping our way home in the inky blackness of early morning, we reached the lower end of the Rat Run, where Harold trod on my dress. "What are you stopping for?" he asked—then all was confusion. I tried to go on—he was still on my frock—we both fell over each other—neither listened to the other. We reached home muddy and ill-tempered, the only break in the "good will to all men" of our Dickens Christmas.

The first important picture we saw by A. J. Munnings was in the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1909. The subject was a white pony in a clay pit. We considered it a very fine work, breath-taking in its sunlight effect.

Generally his visits to Cornwall were in the nature of holidays, but one year Barlow, a St. Ives painter who was working in Lamorna, called us into a cottage where he had found some half-finished sketches A. J. had done. "Look here," he said. "Don't you think this fellow has stuff in him?"

One year A. J. invited Harold and me to go and see his work at Swainsthorpe. His studio was full of canvases of all sizes. Many of the ideas and starts we saw then have since become famous pictures.

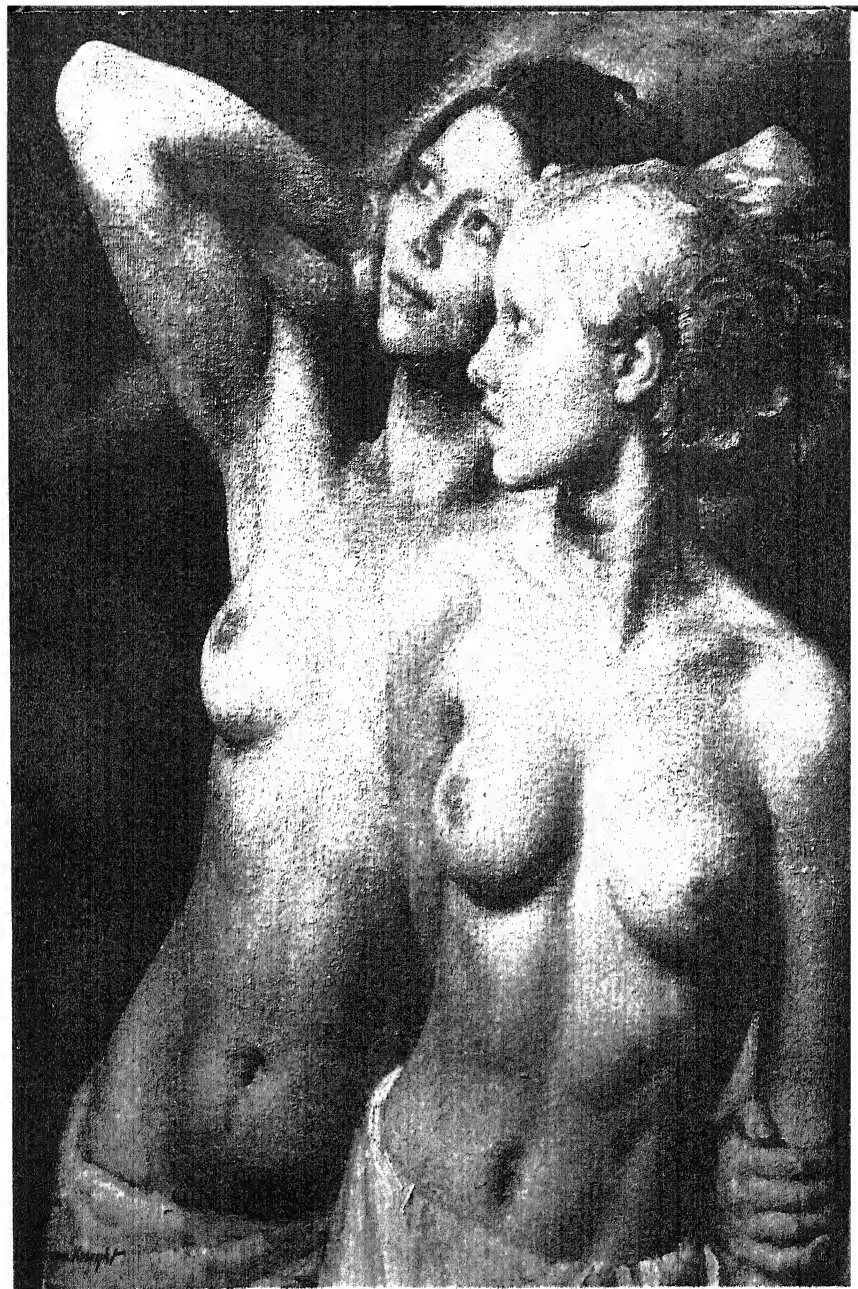
We went over to Norwich for the night and dined with him at the Maid's Head Hotel. We sat in the bar-parlour afterwards sipping port at a shiny mahogany table. To look at A. J. in those surroundings took you back 150 years; he fitted into the antiquity; even his clothes had a cut that belonged to the past. I unfortunately infuriated him on this occasion by taking a bath and thus adding a shilling to his account, nothing compared to the sum he had expended for the wines he had lavished on us the night before. He has never forgiven me this extravagance. "All this washing," he said. "What do you want a bath for?" Several people in one; for a flash a poet, a supersensitive creature

of refined tastes and instincts, of culture; one moment canny, the next plunged back into great generosity and lavish extravagance of the period when Joshua Reynolds existed. He could be the best of hosts and the best of entertainers, as he was that night—there is no better guide to old England than A. J.

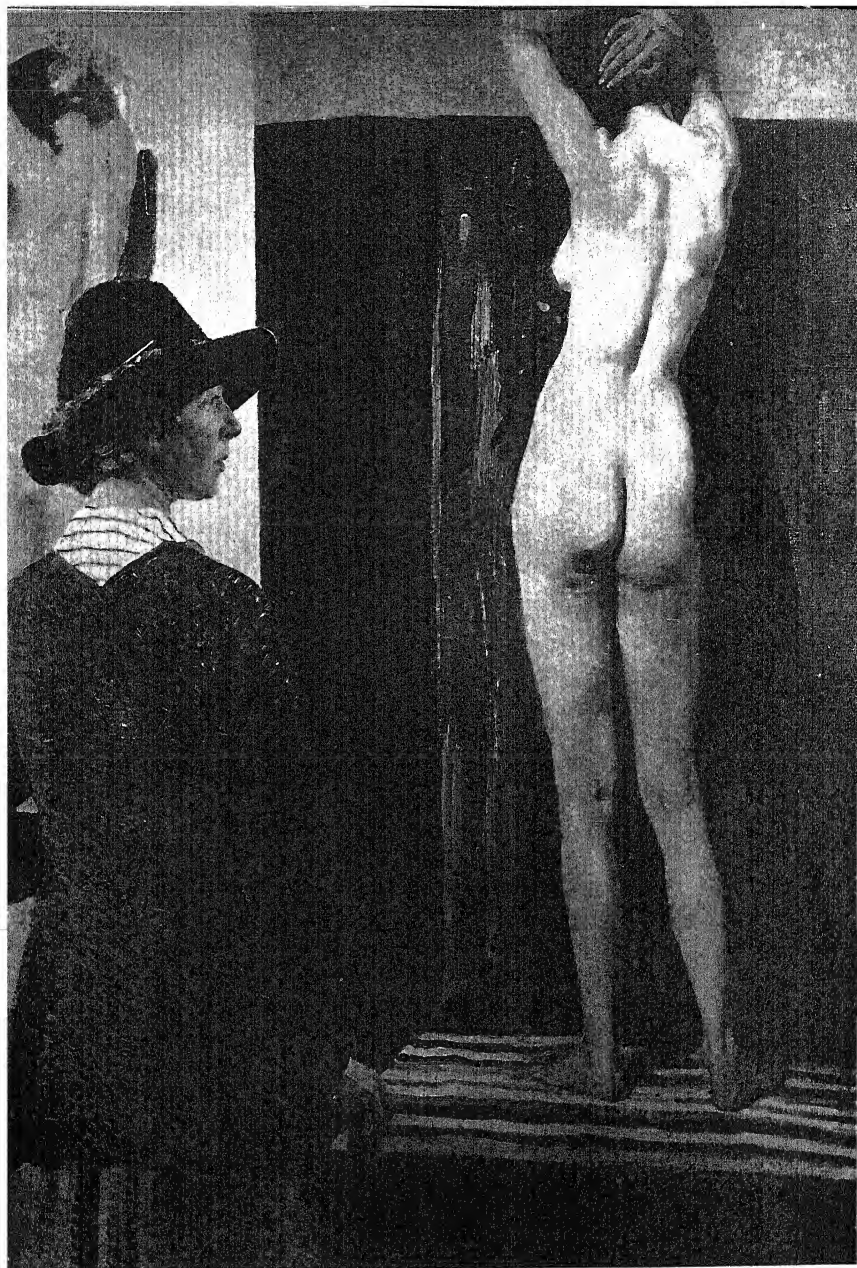
It was after I painted my big picture of Dolly that we first saw the Russian Ballet, which created a furore in London. I feel sorry for anyone who did not see Diaghileff's first seasons. It would be foolish of me to try to tell anything of what has already been so well described; I can only say that it gave me the feeling of being born again into a new and glamorous world, with complete satisfaction for every aesthetic sense.

I had wild dreams of going back-stage to work, but permission was not given; instead, the management reserved a seat for me in the stalls. During the period when Pavlova and Karsavina were appearing in turn I saw every performance. I painted a big picture from my notes of Nijinski and Karsavina in "Pavillon d'Armide." Later on, when I knew more of my subject, I despised that picture, mostly on the grounds of its being mere illustration of the ballet, which was a perfect work of art in itself. The picture was, however, quite beautiful in colour and a record of something wonderful. I am sorry now that I destroyed it during one of my destructive rages when I thought, "I can do better than that another time." Do I? The time passes, the mood changes, I go to something entirely different. Nothing is left but regret and the empty stretcher ready for another picture which is perhaps never painted.

Colonel Paynter built a hut on Lamorna cliffs for me to work in, where I went every day. Early in the year I often came back for dinner having seen no one. John Jeffreys the fisherman sometimes came to look for mullet, and one day he called me to look at two oddly shaped black triangles



DAWN
1932-1933



MYSELF AND MODEL
1913

sticking out of the water, close inshore. They were the tail and a fin of an enormous whale. That day a large school of them was washed up and stranded on Marazion Beach. They lived for days and were then put out of their misery, after several people had cut initials out of their skins.

Close by my hut, Carn Bargaris towered. No human hand could have fashioned so architecturally magnificent a pile of granite. On the flat rocks below it were deep pools for swimming and pools in which to paddle. Pinkish fern-like coral, delicate growth of weed, tiny crabs and fish showed clearly in the shallows, as a picture seen through green-tinted glass.

On warmer days Haughton, Lamorna Birch's wife, often brought Mornie and Joan to race about the rocks and go in and out of the water. Sometimes other girls and children came. Their bare flesh showed, amber or purple—rich against pale rock or water and pearl pink against dark shadow or the blackness of some deep gully.

I revelled in studying all, determined to make up my lack of knowledge of the nude, filling dozens of sketch-books with notes of every pose, movement and effect.

I remember a young girl, her torso as if carved in black shining marble, the wet bathing-suit clinging close round her lovely breasts accentuated the modelling. Other figures were poised ready to dive, or curving through the air from some great flat rock to plunge into depths below bordered by a weed fringe, like coarse hair of greenish-brown colour, which curled and uncurled as the water surged up or receded.

I cannot write about Cornwall without mentioning my great companion Tip, whom I adored. I still know the feel of his black india-rubber nose, and the rough hair on his back. Even though he acknowledged me as his owner, he was servant to none. When he wanted to go hunting he went, and when he wanted a change of scene he would wander for many miles, find a house to go to at meal-times and sit up by the table, showing the whites of his eyes with a pathetic expression. If he liked the people he would stay a

day or two for his health. Many times strangers, seeing our name on his collar, made long journeys to bring the prodigal home, when Tip would act the poor little lost dog, rascal-lion that he was! There was no inch of the countryside he had not smelt and examined, no rabbits' burrow he had not turned upside down. He had been missing for days when one evening we heard a sound as of castanets—Master Tip coming through the studio door, on every tuft of hair was a bell of dried mud. Where he'd been no one knew—perhaps down some badger's hole. Some people called him bad-tempered, I called him reserved—a pawky Scotsman from Aberdeen.

Tip always accompanied our expeditions to Lamorna cliffs, remaining passive until it was time to go home. One day when carrying him into a pool, I slipped and fell on my back with him on top of me. That was a lesson to Mr. Tip. Ever after he could never be induced to leave the cliff-top; he would sit there until we came up, staring with an enraged expression on his face.

One year an Armenian merchant came to Lamorna with bales of beautiful carpets. He told us Brangwyn had let him have pictures in exchange for his wares. Would we do the same? I remember a spring morning by the gate of Lamorna Birch's studio—the daffodils on the stream-banks close to the pool, where his pet trout lived, the murmur of water rushing over stones, the tracery of tree shadow on the road. As Lamorna Birch and I stood at his gate we watched the Carpet Merchant spread his magnificent wares over the road dust, and as an extra inducement for us to buy, he chose a particularly beautiful rug depicting a Potentate with all his wives round him and his wild animals raging round the border; on it the Merchant lay down, legs crossed, head propped on his hand in graceful attitude—a fat little oily man dressed in a morning suit and bowler hat, on his face all the fascination at his command as he said, "This is what they do in the hareems in Turkey."

CHAPTER XVI

TRAMPS

I SENT my picture of Dolly in the green dress to Pittsburg. It received an honourable mention and was later sold to the National Gallery of Ottawa. I got four hundred pounds for "The Green Feather," as I called it, the best price I have ever had for one day's work. I have never seen it since; it was never exhibited in England. A. J. Munnings was in Canada a year or two ago; he tells me it has a glowing golden colour throughout and looks absolutely fresh, a proof that my linseed oil ground has stood all right.

That same year 1912 I had an enormous decorative picture in the Royal Academy. Hanging there it looked to me like much ado about nothing. It has been in store ever since. I expect the frame has rotted away and I shall shed no tears if the canvas has followed its example. What nightmares these big canvases become to the artist! The storage and the bore of them if not disposed of! Yet power in handling paint is gained in that way; besides, it is such tremendous fun to let yourself go and wade in paint. Problems must be dealt with on a big canvas that never occur in a small one. I wish there were millions of walls to cover in a sheer debauch of pigment—Rubens must have felt like this when he covered those acres of cloth. . . .

In 1912 we were hard-working and gay. We went to a fancy-dress dance one night as American Indians, with black worsted wigs; our dresses were designed and painted by Edgar, who knew all about Indians. Mrs. James, our landlady at Trewarveneth, plucked nearly all the tail feathers out of her turkey-cock for our head-dresses. We came back and danced in our studio till seven o'clock in the

morning; then we got up at eleven and danced all day. We were completely mad.

I had a new model, a French girl who was going to pose for me on the rocks in sunlight. I had planned another big composition and started my first study, but both work and gaiety came to an end suddenly—that night Harold fell seriously ill.

We spent a hateful six months in Plymouth, where we had to go—I too fell ill. We could not work. We came away, after what seemed years of misery, with completely recovered health, a motor-car, a depleted exchequer and two tramps for models.

We went up to Wyresdale in Lancashire for a month. Harold was painting Peter Ormrod and his wife Gertie, Mr. F. G. Lyon's daughter. While Harold did his commission I painted the grounds, the byres, the fells. Peter had his black bull held for me to study. His golden-haired pigs were then kept in the kennels that had belonged to the hounds when he and Lord Ribblesdale were joint Masters of the Wyresdale Pack. Very few of my studies survived; it was strange ground again.

In the meantime we had our two tramps on our hands. We directed them to Lamorna to live next to Mr. Jorey's pub. To employ their time, while we were away, they had the job of moving house for us from Trewarveneth to Oakhill at Lamorna Gate. Colonel Paynter had turned Oakhill cottages into one long glorious house. The pigsties and outhouses at the back were pulled down, leaving a fine plot of land for a garden with the mill-stream running down one side.

Our tramp Ernest, was in his element—he had money to spend—he was lord directing all. He carted tons of soil, and, as a display of his mighty strength, carried all sorts of enormous purchases from Penzance on his back.

Sometimes, when we allowed ourselves to think, we wondered if we were wise to give all our possessions into

the hands of strangers—it was inevitable—we did not worry. When we returned nothing was missing; everything had been handled with the greatest care. The waste-land was all tidied up—you never saw such a picture of landscape gardening: paths in all directions to wander down, lawns on which to take our tea, flower-beds full of geraniums, calceolarias, blue lobelias and heliotrope. There was even a rockery made of enormous lumps of granite that our friend boasted no one but he could have lifted. The crowning glory was the pergolas, six of them, galvanised iron, set at intervals down the paths. All borne out from Penzance, five miles away, on Ernest's back and set up with his hands.

Fortunately our cottage was not finished; we should never have been allowed to move anything. I shocked all the housewives of the neighbourhood by ordering all the furniture, linen and silver we required from Harrod's catalogue: we had a deal table and rush-bottomed deal chairs for our dining-room, the blue and white Portuguese pottery we used was ranged on shelves all round, the window-curtains were the same striped blue and white. Our living-room was thirty feet long, with books arranged on a shelf which ran all round the top of the walls.

When we settled in we felt almost lady and gentleman. For the first time in our lives we possessed a house of our own, a cook, a parlourmaid and a gardener. We were equipped even to a lawn-mower.

Until the cottage was ready we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick. Our house-painters were still at work, and in celebration of our arrival we asked Mr. Ernest to give every workman a bottle of beer for dinner—Harold had ordered thirty shillings' worth of beer and cider for our own use, but when we went back that afternoon it had all gone. I dare say traces of that celebration are still to be found on the floors, for I remember talking to one cheery fellow while the white varnish paint dripped from his brush in streams.

Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick gave us a handsome bow-fronted mahogany³ chest of drawers as a house-warming present,

which we still have, and the big blanket she gave us is on my bed at the present time.

At Oakhill we kept open house as we had always done; almost every evening people gathered round our fire. The gramophone was constantly playing for dancing on the rush matting that covered the stone floor. At the far end the silk Persian carpet that I had exchanged for my pictures, made quite a picture itself. I had chosen the one that depicted a gentleman surrounded by his harem and zoo.

Colonel Paynter had also built studios especially for us, and mine was a splendid big place. The surrounding plot of wild land Ernest cleared, exposing all sorts of little vales to wander down and dark pools to paint. The picture I exhibited in the Academy in 1934, "Lamorna Birch and his two daughters" was done there. We were always at work with a hook and saw; a year's neglect and it closed up again with brambles and bracken.

The years 1912 and 1913 showed a tremendous output. I then became definitely aware of an ability that enables eye and hand to work simultaneously without conscious intervention of thought. By reason of my new awareness I made an overwhelming discovery. With a blank canvas or paper in front of me, I could put myself in an attitude of mind to work straight from the subconscious, and achieve new compositions. Unfortunately that state of mind will not always come at my bidding, but when it will I still glory in giving rein to something that knows better than I.

From the first stroke it would seem that a work of art says "I will have this or that. If you are not true to me, I leave you." After months spent on a large and intricate work a moment may arrive when realisation comes that it is dead. It is at such times, when mere skill has failed, that inspiration is again the sole hope. I have often, by deliberately putting myself in an almost unconscious state, been allowed to bring a work back to life again.

I knew the rocks where my hut was inch by inch, the sea there and the sky. I had studied every effect of sunlight

on human flesh, determined to be familiar with its form and change of colour. In Mr. and Mrs. Ernest I had a chance for further study and further experiment, for both our tramps were splendid models. He was like a Greek god, six feet four inches high, with gold curls, perfect features and torso. He loved to take a pose which showed his strength; one day in a rest I heard a voice saying, "How's this for a pose, missus?" He was under a big carpenter's bench, on his back, lifting the bench up on his feet. It may have been a grand pose, but I could not see him. He liked me to paint him lifting heavy lumps of stone; naturally he would tire in a few moments and say, "I'll tell you what, missus, this is a b——y bore."

Ernest, a child in some ways, was faithful as a dog to those who were kind to him. For me he would attempt anything—one of the strangest characters I have ever met, then not thirty years old. In some ways he knew so little, yet he had tramped over a large part of the world and spoke six languages fluently. In every town or village he passed through he called on all clergymen and doctors for translating work to earn enough to go to the next place; this is how we came to make his acquaintance in Plymouth.

Mrs. Ernest had a gipsy-like beauty, a bearing like a queen. As she walked up the lane, strangers always turned for a second glance, when probably they might see pink flesh showing through a torn square of cloth.

When the rural beauty of Lamorna palled on this man and his wife they would go for a week-end to a tramps' lodging-house on the harbour quay in Penzance, with trinkets in Ernest's pockets that he had borrowed from me, possibly to show off as his own. On Mr. and Mrs. Ernest's return they gave vivid descriptions of Saturday nights—a crowd of tramps and beggars collected round the kitchen fire to cook their bacon, sausages and kippers, when they all swopped experiences. I knew then the Tramps' Secret Code, what certain marks left on gateposts stood for. . . . I wish I had kept a diary, there was little of tramps' life unknown to me.

Ernest tried hard to persuade me to join him in acquiring just such a lodging-house as that in Penzance. "It's such a paying business," he said.

After about six months they tired of being in one place, and I was very sorry when they went.

In the autumn of 1913 there was a stir in the village. Someone had seen Augustus and Mrs. John driving down the lane; news came that they had settled at Mrs. Jorey's Temperance Hotel on the Hill.

A. J. Munnings was living at that hotel at the time. He invited us to dinner to meet the Johns. John was powerful and broad-shouldered, his beard was tawny, his hair long, and he wore a tweed suit that had a thread of colour in it running both ways into a check; his shoes were cut dead square at the toes, had long vamps and wide laces. Mrs. John wore the same kind of footwear. Her looks were startling in their rarity; it was easy to see the inspiration she might be to a painter. Her skin was ivory, her hair black; as she sat that evening with her hands folded like the "Mona Lisa" portrait, her long, tapering, white fingers and beautifully kept nails impressed me profoundly. It was impossible to take your eyes off her for long. Her clothes were of her own particular style, and it was she who set the fashion for jumpers and short hair; out-of-doors she wore a long black cape.

New houses were springing up in the valley; it was becoming suburban. One of the inhabitants said it was shocking to see Mrs. John walking in the lane without a hat, and "On Sunday too!"

We had gay parties and dances at Mrs. Jorey's. When feats of strength were being tried, we were amazed at John's athleticism—he was quite an acrobat.

Everybody was hard at work: John did some small panels of Mrs. John on the rocks, with the sea for a background, and he painted a portrait of little Lamorna Birch. A. J. Munnings was developing the style of composition

for which he has since become famous. One day A. J. was complaining of the difficulty of painting the shine on a horse when John said, "Why do you want to paint the shine on a horse? It's better without."

Early in 1914 I was in the throes of painting "March many Weathers." That horse was the first I ever did. Seated on it was a farmer steadying a sack of oats and on the sack was his little girl. I had to dab the paint on the top of the sky in jumps—too much trouble to mount a box each time, for the canvas was large enough to get summer and winter on it as well. The sun was shining, behind was a stormy sky, snow lay on the ground. I had not the courage to make it large enough to contain the whole horse, and Frankie Pollard, who posed for it, said, "How didn't Mrs. Knight put the legs to Bess?" When Academy time came round Bess, the horse, took the case containing her own portrait to the station. It had to lie flat across the cart, which we thought would capsize as it squeezed between the bushes down my studio lane. I thought it a picture of a horse, in reality a white elephant, it has been stored at Bourlet's ever since the Royal Academy closed that year. Some day—if I ever have a studio big enough, I may have it out and "put the legs to Bess."

Frankie's sayings were worth listening to. One day when rattling home in his farm-cart from Penzance I strained to hear him say, "Time was Missusnight when this lane year was all filled wi' donkeys; it's seem ti'me Missusnight the lanes still now be all filled w' donkeys, but they b' two-legged 'uns." One year when we had been in London a long time, it came to Frankie's ears that I had not been well and I was told he said, "Time Missusnight came back and smelt a good manure heap, that'd cure 'un."

In the spring of 1914 we met Barry Jackson for the first time. He came to see A. J.'s studio and to have his portrait painted. With him was Scott Sunderland, full of the same inconsequent humour. Dorothy Cheston, who later became

Dorothy Cheston Bennett, was staying at Mrs. Jorey's; she was then studying as a pianist.

Suddenly the death of a much-loved member of our colony put an end to all joy. . . .

I returned to Oakhill from the inquest in a shattered condition, to find our "Belsize" drawn up at our gate. On the running boards, mattresses and bedding were rolled and roped, kettles, saucepans and frying-pans hung all round; in the dickey-seat sat Charles Naper, wrapped round with an old red eiderdown. All was ready for the journey to Dozmare Pool on the Bodmin Moors, where we were to camp in the Napers' hut—Lamorna was no longer the "Happy Valley."

We stopped at Truro to buy stores. Ella Naper knew exactly what we should need. It was the first time in my life that I had done any serious household shopping. It seemed miraculous that anyone should know exactly how much rice, tea, flour and sugar would be required for a month—even matches were not forgotten. In a shop there I found a blazer striped like the rainbow, which Gert Harvey christened my suit of mourning, for although I bought the gay thing, I could not stop weeping.

The moor was glorious up at Dozmare. The long, unbroken lines of Brown Gelly reflected in the pool. The rough grass washed and bleached, the freshness—what balm it was! On a morning when the mist lay in wreaths across the lake and the tops of the hills showed above, it was still—a painted picture.

We lived in a little hut that Charlie had built. The Napers' bed stretched across the whole of one end. Harold and I slept in a low tent outside, till it was blown away in a gale one night. Gert and Harold Harvey slept at the farm close by, where they burnt nothing but peat in the open fire, that flavoured deliciously our home-made bread and scalded cream. When we all crowded into Charlie's hut for meals, not a single other body could have been prised in.

The girls did the housework, the men carted the water

for washing the crocks, and we all bathed in Dozmare Pool.

One Sunday the men were out walking and Ella and I were doing the family washing. The hut was completely filled with steam and wet linen. Ella, an adorably lovely slim creature, brown as a berry, was dressed in a pair of French workman's corduroy trousers belonging to Harold; her arms bare and covered with suds as she rubbed the clothes in an old tin bath, clay-pipe in her mouth. We were miles away from everywhere, outside was complete silence, suddenly broken by voices from four visitors who had seen my name in the book at a village inn, a mile away. They had come to call in all their smartest clothes. I had met them only once before.

We worked and we tramped miles over the moorland and country. One hot afternoon Gert, Ella and I found ourselves in a wood where Pan might have lived and nymphs danced. Now, when I want peace I go back there in imagination!

Picture nature's own thick carpet of emerald moss and bright red pine needles—the sumptuously marked grass snake slithering through to drop over the bank into the River Fowey, a mere stream that ran between densely packed pine trees, their trunks mast-like before overhead their branches spread and made a ceiling. Here and there a spindly beech festooned its leaves of palest green over the density of an ink-black pool, gold-spotted where the sun pierced some little hole in the fir branches overhead, turning the peat-stained clear brown water into little patches of pure gold.

We stripped and went into the pool naked. I shall never forget seeing my two companions in such a setting, one blonde, pearly of skin, the other dusky with long straight black hair.

Later, I worked in that wood, doing many careful black and white drawings and several water-colours. I doubt if I shall ever paint the great picture which was their purpose.

For several weeks we were a complete community in ourselves; the news of the day did not reach us.

We had occasion to motor to Plymouth, and crossing the ferry, we overheard, "If Russia chips in, France chips in. If France chips in, we chip in!" That is how we heard we were on the brink of war. . . .

Suddenly everything turned black.

CHAPTER XVII

SPRING

ON returning home we found a model waiting in our garden. She looked a sunflower herself among the sunflowers. I engaged her at once. While we were working she told me of her terror of a painter called Curry, staying at Newlyn—"I know he is going to try and kill me again; he has tried to do so before," she said, and I thought she was talking sensational nonsense.

I was never able to finish the last picture I was doing; she left suddenly—in a panic. . . .

After she had gone we received letters from Curry demanding her address—threatening dire consequences if we did not give it to him, and from them we gathered her fears had not been unfounded.

A few weeks later we read in the daily paper of a murder sensation—Curry had found her—shot her and shot himself; both were dead.

The picture called "Mallows" bought by Lord Leverhulme from the International Exhibition was of her. I do not think he ever knew its history.

We were not to be lady and gentleman for long; soon we had to give up our establishment and employees. It had been good to have a taste of such luxuries, but a house on occasions was apt to be a nuisance, particularly when servants turned out to be unsatisfactory. Even the car had to be sold; we did not regret it very much, it made us apt to lose full use of our legs, and we could not go across country, one of Cornwall's particular charms. Great sport it was to climb the stone hedges, and the farmers never minded our going through their fields if their crops were respected.

From the roads, what can be seen of Cornwall is poor compared with the wilder parts, where cushions of delicately pink-belled heather and coarse tufts of grass jostle between the slabs of violet grey granite, outcrop and grand edifice fashioned by Nature.

Here, set high in a lonely waste, above a stretch of country, an immense slab of rock, a monolith, is laid flat on two upright blocks to form a ponderous crude table for ancient worship. Here, a rough stone ring is a wedding ring, through which young couples crawl. Here, a spring is rounded with damp mossy walls, at the base a patch of liverwort grows, flat mat of yellow green: "A blessing on you, if at this well you drink."

The Merry Maidens, rude posts of stone, make circle in a sloping field at Boleigh Hill-top: "sometimes at midnight the Maidens dance." Behind, two hills stretch in mounds of deepest blue; "Domes of Silence" W. H. Davies and I christened them, regretting the description's baser use.

Among savage growth, a network of stone hedges encloses flat-face cottage, square farm-place and meadow, spotted with yellow and white of Guernsey cows, square shapes as they graze head down, rumps all turned one way, the tasselled tail a-swing from side to side.

In the spring, the chequer of young corn, a viridescent shimmer of slender blades and the corduroy patches of purple plough-land form play-board for rain cloud and for sun that in wave of light and dark flow on over the brown and grey of the wilder country, ablaze with the chrome of gorse.

In the valley-dip, filled with lichen-bearded trees, the blackthorn, in dazzle of white powder, brings winter back again—"March snow" they call it.

The year still young, a sunlit morning, down Lamorna Valley, varnished buds are thinking to burst. The elms edge their effulgence of twig with rosy blush, a halo scarce discernible. It would then seem that the wood growth has no root, is weightless, suspended in a pulsating atmosphere,

pregnant with moisture of the Atlantic mist. Unreal—a dream—a dream valley.

To throw my arms around those static elephantine tree-trunks, to feel the rough bark against my face—what joy! And what annoyance to find a dirty stain down the front of a clean dress that had been forgotten in an access of sentimentality.

Nostalgia comes each spring in London, for the rain, the mist, for the mud and dung, for thick shoes and a mackintosh, for the glory that is Cornwall, the mystic Cornwall that goes to people's heads and make them a little queer. It has not the grandeur of many parts, much is not what is called "old world" or "picturesque." Much is sordid—ruins of tin-mines and shafts and corrugated iron roofs, but it seems actually haunted; ghosts have a habit of stalking abroad and calling on even the least imaginative of us.

In 1915 the first restrictions against painting any part of the coast-line came into force. At St. Ives, where we went to work for a while, when painting some children playing in the Harbour, I put a dab or two to represent the sea horizon; I knew that even to draw a perfectly straight line there might be interpreted as a sinister act. The official who came to examine what I was doing asked, "What are those spots of paint?" I told him, and he said, "How am I to know they don't mean something?" After that I confined my studies to boys swimming, looking straight down on them.

The restrictions became more and more severe; everyone was suspected as a spy; we were forbidden to work out of doors at all, but early in 1916 I was filled with a desire to paint a spring picture—I had not forgotten Pearly Bottoms at Staithes, and spring there in Cornwall was even more theatrically moving.

Material lay at hand right behind my Lamorna Studio, so crouching among the prickly brambles and gorse, my slip of paper hidden, only now and again I showed my head in

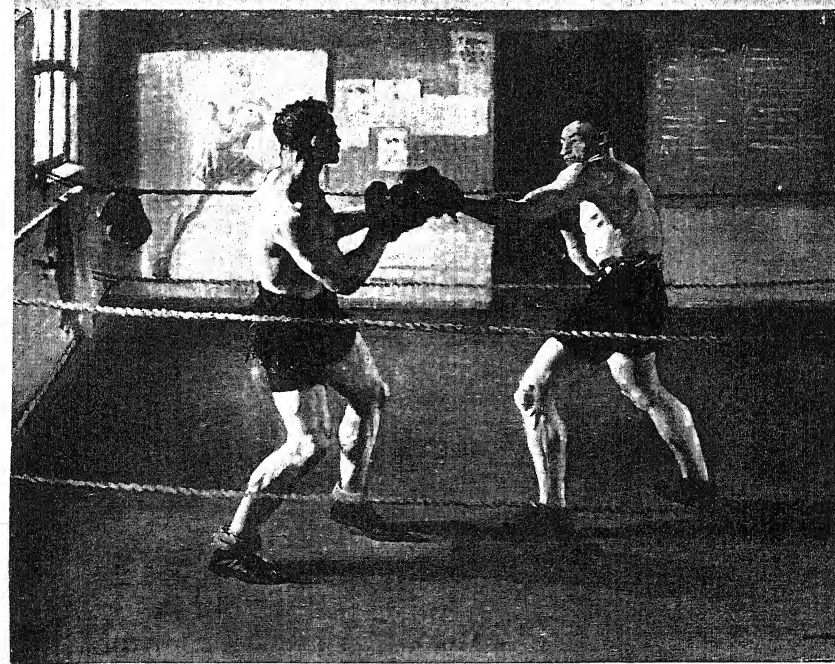
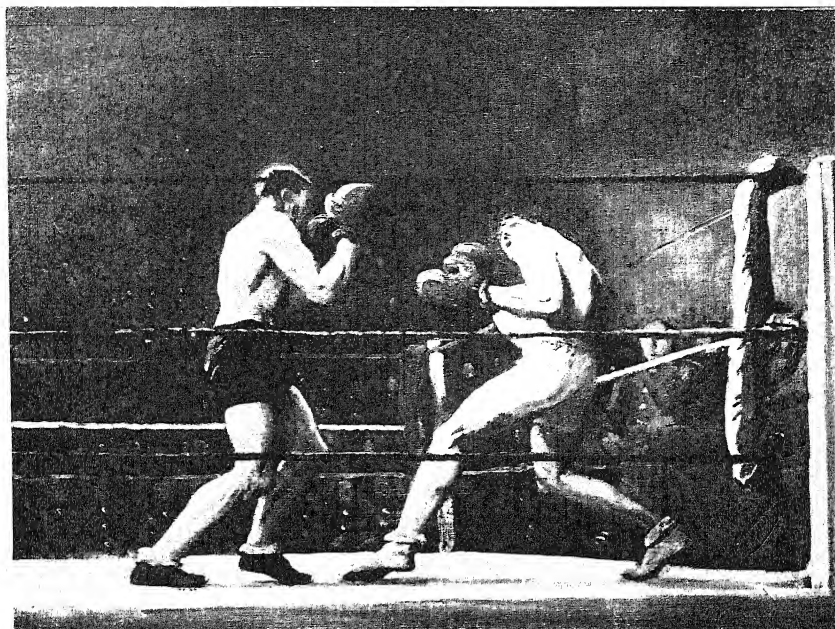
a dither of fear, just as if it were a terrible sin to draw the shape of an ivy leaf—a sin that would have meant prison had I been seen through the telescopes of coast-watcher and amateur detective, whose pleasure and duty it was to spy perpetually for any delinquent.

When I had learnt by heart the fan shape of a particular bunch of twigs, the colour of a field or lump of stone, I dared stay no longer, and ran into the studio to build my six-foot picture from slender notes—a bush, a bird, a cloud in the sky—thus my wicked work was done. *Nepenthe* in a holocaust of hate then engulfed youth, life and hope.

A rainbow arched across the sky of the picture; in *Ella* and *Charlie Naper* with rod and basket and in the blossom, I would give *Spring's* newness that comes back and back again. My original inspiration—primroses—was omitted, no significant reason why, only because I could find no place to put them.

A magpie was in the foreground. When *Gertrude Harvey*, who is Cornish and superstitious, saw that magpie, she said; "You will never sell that picture. It is unlucky to see one magpie; if you do you must spit over your right foot." She has said since, nearly every time I met her, "Why don't you paint out that magpie?" However, the bird was not without compassion, for close on twenty years later, this year, 1935, it was bought under the terms of the *Chantry Bequest* for the Tate Gallery.

It became more and more difficult to get food. Rations ran out before a week was over, and butcher's offals were a luxury. In November 1916 I went to several farms trying to buy eggs for our dinner, but I succeeded in obtaining only one, which I put in my cardigan pocket. Night had fallen; I took a short-cut home across a field close to the *Napers'* cottage; I knew the ground well. In the darkness, under some elms, I ran full tilt into some twigs; hoping to clear them I jumped—into a ramification of branches, a big limb had fallen. I heard a crack above the sound of snapping



BOXING CONTEST
1917

wood. . . . My leg was broken—no words can describe my rage which even dulled the pain. Harold heard me calling as he was putting on the vegetables in the kitchen. I expected him to be as furious as myself when he saw me lying there helpless, and was surprised that anyone could be so kind. He rushed to fetch mackintoshes—the ground was sopping wet, but while he was away, the Napers' donkey thought my lying there was a good game; he started cavorting and kicking up his heels all round me. . . .

We were then living alone in the cottage, but Harold soon got help from the farm near, and all the colony of friends collected in the field to keep me company while someone bicycled to Penzance to fetch a doctor.

The Simpsons' house was the nearest to ours, so they were fetched first; their tragedy was almost as bad as mine: Walter and Ruth Simpson had, by a miracle, obtained a whole leg of mutton, which had just been put on their table; they had had to leave it untouched, and at a time when such luxury was almost unknown.

We all smoked cigarettes. Lamorna Birch knelt to hold my hand in his particularly silky one, while he tried to console me by telling that it was one of the most picturesque scenes he had ever seen: the lanterns on the ground lighting up the crowd, the donkey's head hanging over the fence, my recumbent figure, the trees overhead black against a Prussian blue sky; "Like a picture of the Flight into Egypt."

Both my bones were broken above the ankle: a double fracture; no morphia or anaesthetic was given when the leg was set. The doctor said: "I am afraid you will not sleep very well to-night; I wish I had brought an aspirin." A moment afterwards I heard a roar of laughter—he had walked into the kitchen; sitting in a circle on the floor were about twenty people, and in the middle of them was a bottle of brandy that Charles Walter had fetched from Jorey's inn, commonly called "The Wink." He had electrified the company of villagers assembled there by saying in his sing-song

voice, "I want a bottle of brandy; Mrs. Knight has broken her leg."

The egg was found uncracked in my pocket; Harold ate it for breakfast the next morning.

During the months I lay in our one sitting-room A. J. Munnings came every night to read aloud. The first reading was of Compton Mackenzie's first book; then came *Jorrocks*, a rich mine to unearth! It was a treat I looked forward to all through the day, for those who never heard A. J. read *Jorrocks* have missed something!

If he was able to get any fish from John Jeffreys, the one fisherman in Lamorna, A. J. brought it up for Harold to cook for dinner. I remember A. J. standing over me one night with the saddest look on his face; I could not look at the beautiful grilled herring on the plate he held over me, —I was in pain at the time. Harold's and his rare feast was quite spoilt, they would keep turning round from the long table at the end of the room.

I was nursed by Harold and friends who came in relays—Eleanor Hughes, Ruth Simpson and Gert Harvey—the latter was a real standby; she even cleaned the cottage from top to bottom every time before leaving, and posed for me to draw her between whiles. Without such friends I should have fared badly at that time. The accident happened at a peculiarly impecunious time.

One evening A. J. found an enormous log standing outside the gate of a neighbour who had himself stolen it. We were puzzled by the thumping sound that heralded A. J.'s arrival. He had rolled the piece of tree-trunk all the way up the lane, and it went on our grate, where it stayed for three days before burnt out. All the time I was terrified I should receive a visit from these neighbours.

A. J. had brought Annie and Bernard Walke to our house some time before. We were strangely in accord, and felt we had known them for years. They were both long and thin, and Ber always wore dandy silk socks—he was not in the least like a parson to look at. A man with ideals that

he lived up to—he was big-hearted enough to understand anyone and had it in him to enjoy vulgar fun as much as any. After we became intimate we often went to stay with the Walkes at St. Hilary, as simple as any monastery in its furnishings. His rectory was surrounded by a wild garden with groves of trees, near the church where he planted the old graves with multicoloured primroses.

With my leg in plaster, we went to St. Hilary, when there was a hard frost, and Ber borrowed an old bath-chair to trundle me every day to a pond where children were skating and sliding. He looked picturesque and elegant in his black hat and navy suit with a muffler round his neck. I did pencil studies of all the skating figures as I sat in my chair. The drawings provided material for two water-colours and a large oil picture, bought by Sir William Longstaff for Australia. It was the first standing work I did after the accident—I had to prop myself up by the studio door. Till that time I had scorned chain cigarette smokers; I now found cigarettes helped me.

Later, we were allowed special permits for working out of doors, so that spring and summer found me with three models, working harder than ever on the rocks by my hut, a period when everything I touched came off well. Perhaps enforced rest had been beneficial.

One day when a model was posing a Mousehole fisherman stopped me; he wished to speak of something most important. I put down palette and brushes and told my model to go away; she took care not to go out of earshot. Mr. Pentreath: "Mrs. Knight, we fishermen are very grateful to you for lending your hut here to we coast-watchers last winter to keep ourselves dry and make our cups of tea in—I should like to show my gratitude in some way—I have at home a beautiful picture. The frame got broken a bit, so I took it into Mr. Peak's in Penzance to get it mended, and he said, 'Mr. Pentreath, that is a valuable picture you've got there; a gentleman has been in and seen it—he offers you as much as two pounds for it,' but I said I would not part

with it. It's a picture, Mrs. Knight," he continued, "of the Infant Jesus and the Infant Samuel, naked, but girt about the loins." At this point my model burst out into a shriek of ribald laughter. I glared at her . . . Mr. Pentreath went on as if she did not exist. "Well I would like to show my gratitude to you—I should be proud to lend you the picture to copy it off." I replied, "Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Pentreath; I appreciate your kindness, but I have never studied copying pictures. I am afraid I could not do it, although I am very grateful to you for thinking of lending it to me."

I received a letter from E. V. Lucas telling me he had written a little play specially for Ellen Terry to act with Teddy and Nellie Craig, who were then children. Ellen Terry had consented to give a performance for a war charity at one of the theatres. Would I illustrate the programme, to be sold at a special price and the drawings auctioned from the stage?

Arrived in London I went to the Arundel Hotel. I was in the act of manicuring my nails, between five and six o'clock, when suddenly there was a noise of aeroplane engines and explosions. I went to the window; there was one man in the narrow street looking up; in a few moments a laughing and excited crowd had gathered. The first daylight air-raid. . . . No one seemed frightened. I did not think of being so—I just went on with my manicure, not realising the seriousness until looking through the front window I saw a terrific explosion on the other side of the river about half a mile away: a lot of black things hurtled into the air, quickly lost in dense smoke.

Every day for ten days I went to Ellen Terry's house in the King's Road. Mrs. Gordon Craig, who was there, had then a few white lines which only enhanced the beauty of her jet-black hair, and round her neck she wore a chain of flat gold leaves.

Every wall downstairs was covered with Gordon Craig woodcuts. When I met Ellen Terry she took me straight

up to her bedroom to show me the profile portrait that G. F. Watts had done of her as his girl wife. I always saw her dressed in a loosely fitting blue silk dress; the sleeves were wide, showing her fine arms and large, expressive hands. She was taller than I had expected her to be. Her hair was grey and loosely piled on top of her head; she was still beautiful—age would not spoil the magnificent bone structure of her face. That anyone so great as she could be so friendly and kind seemed impossible, but I felt so sorry for her when she had to be persuaded that the old box-beds she was bent on having repaired were not worth bothering about; I found them all piled in the hall one morning, they were soon put back in the attic. My awe of her was always mixed with grief that she should ever be considered old and have to be constantly reminded that she was overtaxing her strength: "She must lie down and rest." I felt like shrieking: "Let her live while she is here."

The rehearsals took place and I drew them all. I remember Ellen Terry saying to Nellie, "Do not turn your body in profile to the audience; it is the poorest view. If you must turn round, keep your body full face and turn your head only." She would get up from the high-backed chair and illustrate her point with such perfection of art and grace, that made it difficult to keep attentive to what I was doing.

She regretted the days when the gas footlights were replaced by electricity. She said, "Gas footlights were so much softer and more beautiful, more like sunlight. I hate the harshness of electricity."

I never saw her again, but often received postcards and kind messages.

I first met P. G. Konody in 1913 when he bought for Lord Rothermere a picture of may-blossom painted outside my Lamorna studio. The next time I saw him at Peter Ormrod's when he came to value an Old Master. He looked so white and frail in contrast to Peter, who was a typical John Bull.

In 1916 Konody wrote asking if I would execute one of the enormous canvases for the Canadian War Records. The price was to be a nominal one—three hundred pounds. The subject suggested: "Physical Training in a Camp," men bathing in the river in sunlight. Permission was given for me to work anywhere I liked in Witley Camp. To start in November was a little late in the year to make studies for such a picture, but I hoped for the best.

Godalming was the nearest place to Witley, and with difficulty I found a room, for every place was full of people who had left London on account of the air-raids.

Suffering from an awful cold, I took a 'bus to Witley Camp on a cold, grey day, to find the ugliness everywhere devastating—row after row of brown huts, and khaki-clad figures drearily standing about in the mud. There was no river at all for miles as far as I knew.

I plunged into work with a sketch-book, hoping to find signs of bathing somewhere, but all I saw was the Scotties washing their knees in the horse-troughs on Saturday evenings before going out with their girls. I suggested painting these to Konody—he did not consider it a suitable subject.

I took out canvases and paints, painting anything that looked in the least interesting, hoping some idea would come. After three weeks of effort, feeling thoroughly depressed and hopeless, I was wandering round the camp and stopped at a barber's hut, inside a man was being shaved. I could see through the lather a cauliflower ear, a half-closed eye and a beetling brow, so I waited outside while he was cleaned up, and when he came out I accosted him with, "Are you a boxer?" He said he was and promptly invited me to come at once to the gymnasium where he reigned supreme. Here was a subject at last with a vengeance!

The gymnasium became my studio and Joe Shears my devoted attendant, model and teacher of all points of the sport. He was bantam-weight champion of all the forces at the time. In contrast to his well-formed ivory coloured body, his face was dark magenta; his nose flattened, his lips

protruding, mashed by the many blows they had received. When working, he wore black satin trunks and a red sash, a beautiful, glorious colour scheme.

Now was every facility—"Boxing" must be the subject. I made numberless studies both in paint and black and white, often working while Joe sparred with another man. To get life in the action, the men repeated it every time I looked up—they got quite clever at doing what I wanted. For such purposes I always work that way now. I often painted, too, from notes made at contests. On the way to one of these, I saw the Devil's Punch-Bowl by moonlight, a misty night—it looked enormous when we got out to look at it. There were six or seven of us in the taxi; I had to sit on one of the men's knees.

My "studio" became the central interest of the camp. The men spent all the time they could sitting round the big tortoise stove that had on it a large tin of water, serving to wash my paint-brushes in, anyone's hands and Joe's face. The water was infrequently changed. The drearily ugliness and monotony of camp life was stamped on the men's faces, sick for their homes and their own big country. We all had barking coughs through smoking too many cigarettes: I was fed with a new one directly an end was reached.

The depression grew and grew. I heard the first news of drowning in mud at Passchendaele—slime and duck-boards, that was all the men could talk about when they came back to the camp. . . .

One snowy period I worked out of doors. Joe fetched and carried, bringing relays of heaters to put in my pockets, he was so zealous that one day I found myself on fire because he had made the iron inside the case red-hot. It burnt a big hole in my scarlet cardigan which Joe was so fond of borrowing "to sweat in"—as he expressed it. That coat was the only spot of colour for miles. I had used it for models in Cornwall; Konody seeing it so often in sunny pictures against blue seas and skies, christened it "the Cornish Scarlet." Gert Harvey borrowed it to pose in for Harold, her husband

—it went to the wash-tub hundreds of times, and all it had cost was half a crown at a sale in Penzance.

Anna Airy had another of the War Records to do at the camp, but her subject was a cookshop. I never saw her there, the camp was so big, nor did I ever see another woman. I always took my midday meal in a kitchen near my work, when the cook treated me with greatest deference, even laying a cloth on a shelf in the larder, but it would have been pleasanter to have remained where it was warm and there was company!

In the evenings Anna Airy often came to my hotel, and we had little dinners with the men I was working with. All the officers in the dining-room looked askance; they could not object to my guests, but when Joe came all was smiles, for he was everyone's pet. "I never look for trouble," he often told me. . . . He would walk the three miles back with me in the evening when he had leave, always washing his face before we started—one of the most perfect little gentlemen that it has been my lot to meet. Everyone did what he could to help, and I often heard Captain Simpson Ray, who was in charge of that particular part of the camp, telling the men to modify their language—"A lady is about!"

Joe was full of plans to make my fortune and his first lay-out of his project was always: "Mrs. Knight, it'll be a hundred per cent best for you, etc." He wanted to take a shop in Central London with a big window to exhibit all my pictures of him. Once I gave him the Leicester Galleries as my address one time when up in London; he went instead to the Leicester Lounge, and asked for Mrs. Laura Knight. In answer to his inquiries they said, "Oh, yes, we know her well; she is here most nights."

Harold came for Christmas and Konody too for a day or two, when we went over to inspect my pictures and had Christmas fare at midday in my cookshop.

Of the pictures painted one went to China, one received a medal at the Sports Pictures Exhibition at the Olympiad in Amsterdam, one I sold at the Olympiad at Los Angeles.

The walls of the gymnasium became covered with drawings and full-size cartoons for the big picture.

Early in January 1917 I came to London to hang at the Leicester Galleries the best collection of pictures I had ever got together. That year had been as successful as any; a portrait of the model who interrupted Mr. Pentreath was very well noticed at the Grosvenor Galleries, and soon after it was hung I received a letter on an enormous sheet of paper, in enormous handwriting, a polite request from Mrs. Epstein: would I please be kind enough to let her know the name and address of the model who had posed for my portrait, as Epstein would like to model her. That is how I came to make the Epsteins' acquaintance.

My show was hung. Brown and Phillips predicted a great success. I was on the crest of a wave. Unfortunately waves have a habit of breaking. . . .

CHAPTER XVIII

DELIRIUM

BEFORE telling how I became completely engulfed, I must say that some time previously, when Steer, my frame-maker, heard I had arranged another show, he wrote and told me of a collection of beautiful old swept frames, and he sent me canvases to fit each one. They were good, but fantastically expensive, and like most frames ordered by post, they suited nothing. Joe, on leave for a few days in London, brought another boxer to a room I hired in Gower Street, where I did a further study for the big composition. It was bitter weather out of doors, so I built a roaring fire for the stripped men. I stood with my back to the window, well aware that my front was scorched and back half frozen, but I thought I should take no harm.

One day soon after, I lunched with A. J. Munnings, and remember hating the taste of devilled kidneys, the main dish. A. J. saw me into a 'bus at Piccadilly; I was on my way to Colonel Mayes's office at the top of a building in Oxford Street; I got off at Oxford Circus close to, and being too early, I stopped to look at Peter Robinson's window. While standing there, my knee-caps started jumping up and down, and I became definitely aware of a high temperature. "I've caught it from Harold," I thought; he was at an hotel, just on his legs again after a pretty bad dose of the war 'flu that we had become so used to.

I kept my engagement with Colonel Mayes, then the head of the Physical Training for the Colonial Forces, and I was in a fever of excitement for he was planning for me to execute some enormous decorations, the subjects various sports I had often wanted to tackle, and he thought no one else could draw the movement and get the technical side of the

sport correct, as he considered I had done in boxing. The interview had its ghoulisn aspect, for he had just written a book on bayonet-fighting, profusely illustrated with photographs, one of which, with remarkable realism, showed how to plant the foot in a man's belly when pulling out the bayonet which had pierced his chest—I had always avoided the part of the camp where those awful sacks hung, that were used for bayonet practice.

By the time the interview was over, I scarcely knew whether I was standing on my head or my heels, and when Colonel Mayes, so full of the benefit of fresh air, insisted on riding on top of a 'bus as far as Leicester Square, where my show which we were going to see was already hung, I felt ashamed to confess my physical weakness of the moment to so radiantly healthy a man, though it was a very cold evening.

At the Leicester Galleries, another excitement arose: on seeing certain pictures painted on the Lamorna Rocks, Colonel Mayes exclaimed, "Who is that girl? I must have her to train—she is exactly what I have always been looking for—is she really like that?—are her insteps really so flexible?" etc., etc. I assured him all was as true as I could make it. He would make of her the Example of Feminine Physical Perfection for the whole world—his wife would take care of her—she should receive big money right from the beginning. This young friend of mine, Marjorie her name was, had done me many good turns in posing her loveliness for me. That I should be able to put her in the way of so stupendous a career was overwhelming; fortunately she was free and needed an occupation, in fact one was a necessity.

Perhaps more exalted than ever before, I returned to Harold, waiting for me to dress and dine with Barry Jackson at the Café Royal, and after bathing my scarlet face, wisdom came—I took my temperature, which was pretty high. We stayed at the hotel and I attempted to help Harold address the invitation cards for my exhibition, a completely impossible task. Again the clinical thermometer came out, I had

reached 104 degrees. The doctor said it was 'flu, and two days later pneumonia, so I was bundled all hot, dirty, and in a semi-delirium, into a taxi, doctor's orders, and taken to a nursing-home. That anyone but me ever came out of that place other than feet foremost is hard to believe. What its purpose really was I never knew, but most certainly it was not to save life; for I was from the first left in utter neglect and filthy personal discomfort, not made obvious to Harold, Al Crocker and other visitors. No one would listen when in a breathless fever I tried to tell of it, or to dictate letters and telegrams to be sent to Marjorie—for messages came constantly from Colonel Mayes to ask that this and that should be done without delay—all I got in reply was: "Hush—hush, you must not talk." Bottled and corked confusion for me filled life, so the plans came to naught.

One terrible night came—I knew I was going to die—I would not die—just because those utter devils in that place cared naught—my only hope the night nurse, a good girl, who only stayed because I begged her, and Harold doubled her weekly wage. By sheer force of mind I kept her in my room, writing mad letters all night from my dictation—to a doctor friend—to this person—to that—I must have help. . . . Harold in his weakened state had succumbed, had a serious collapse, could visit me no more. I would not die—I would not commit suicide by throwing myself from that fourth-story window, always wide open—I was constantly being waked from delirium by the pain caused by struggling to get out of bed and into the sky through that big opening. . . . I would have someone always there! I made such disturbance that the Matron—the owner—that awful woman was fetched, who said with sarcasm: "And do you *really* think that *your* case warrants *special* nursing?" "Yes, I do," I almost shouted—"and I'll have a nurse to look after me"—I must have swooned then, for a complete blank came—till closer to death than ever before or since, in a semi-conscious state, I became aware of gentle hands, of being washed—for the first time; the vile stench of trench

decay dispersed—I had waded in mud, all made of decomposing flesh, stuck with bones and bits of torn uniforms—my foot was often planted dreadfully in the belly of a friend as I pulled. . . . “The lark, he’d save me—Shelley’s lark—read it, everyone—do not stop. Hail to thee, blithe Spirit!” No matter how badly read, those words put me into the instability of the blue, more concrete and real than the muck beneath. I lay supported, ecstatic on those frail wings as I floated over broad river-tracks and snow-capped mountain heights. Shelley saved my reason and my life.

Every night for the first five nights the German planes came and made murderous music overhead—even through the barred shutters the engines could be heard. To give me air the door was opened, through it I saw long sheeted forms carried past, moved down to the basement’s slender safety. As herald for the first raid, a maroon had burst just outside with soul-shattering effect—a rush for blinds and shutters to shield the light—then the procession past my door began and later, all in wildest fear, madness punctuated with resignation, I heard shriek after shriek ring with piercing tear of sound, and a baby was delivered dead into the glory of this world down on a floor below!

On the fifth night the bomb-droppers gave us an all-night raid—the day nurse was trapped—too much shrapnel in the streets! “One o’clock, dare we ask for a cup of tea? It would do you good, too, but that woman she’ll never let us have it.” Suddenly, in the midst of thunderous noise of racing engines, sharp rattle of machine-guns, thumping bursts and short scattering sounds as of gigantic hail came an extraordinary sense of peace, of well-being. “It’s my own wickedness,” I whispered to the nurse. “I thought of myself too much—I have realised how much more others are suffering, it has cured me.” The nurse, not so convinced as I of the power of mind over matter, brought out the thin glass tube of mercury—my crisis had come and gone, I was down a few points—and there I stayed, living at an enormous rate, with great power of brain

and sense of potential thought and action, giant-like. I would paint pictures to stop war for ever: a theatre full of money-lenders and callous women who jeered and laughed while in the limelight on the stage two men fought with bayonets, according to Colonel Mayes's instructions. I went to Mars—I lived through a prehistoric battle and the men wore bronze girdles with beasts' heads for finials that overlapped to hold the breech-cloth in place, as they fought with tooth and claw to tear each other apart. I found that it was false psychology which made a Victorian "story" picture bad, I delivered a lecture explaining how to stress such literary tales was for the painter an impossibly false task: that gentlemen gave no outward emotional sign on receiving their death sentence from a doctor—and so on, from semi-madness to sane thought of extraordinary clarity, from thence through the ensuing weeks to greater and greater peace, while specialists came to pound, thump, and wonder why no sign of T.B. showed, while my temperature still kept high.

Meanwhile, Harold recovered, and brought food for the nurses and myself which was kept in hiding outside on the window-sill, and champagne bottles stood again, upright in a bowl of water—I thought of Mother. . . . "She can go in a week's time if all goes well," the doctors said, "and she must have a fur coat to wear in London for the week before you go to Cornwall." The choosing of that fur coat, the first I ever had, did more than all doctoring and champagne. How the nurse and I enjoyed the pile sent from a big shop, of course I wanted the best and most expensive, but gosh! after the way money had been flowing away. . . . Even though almost by every post letters came to say that at the Leicester Galleries so-and-so is sold £100—£120—£85—£40. "If a picture is sold to-day, you must have the best coat," said Harold, and there and then went to telephone Brown and Phillips, who replied that Mrs. Sam Courtauld had just bought one of the larger canvases. I still wear that same old musquash coat, though cut down, mended, and remodelled!

CHAPTER XIX
RED, WHITE AND BLUE

WE returned to Cornwall and I started the big canvas, but all the careful studies were still pinned on the gymnasium walls at Witley—it was impossible for me to fetch them, so I sent directions to a friend to fix the charcoal; my mistake was in sending too big a bottle of fixative! When the two life-sized cartoons reached me one was completely effaced—washed right away, the other badly blurred.

I wrote to ask Joe Shears if he would come to Lamorna to pose again. He got sick-leave in some way known only to himself and arrived in hospital blue, which showed off his complexion to a nicety. He wore perpetually round his neck a handsome red, white and blue silk scarf, which grew longer and longer every day till it trailed on the ground.

Before I had left Witley a rage started among the men for making wool mats. Joe arrived at Lamorna the evening before we returned from Ber Walke's, where we had been staying for a day or two. The sight of my studio, in which we were camping, struck us dumb by its magnificence: under every object was a red, white and blue wool mat; even then there were some to spare, just put about for ornament; Joe's present—he had made them himself. He chose those particular colours because "I knew how you loved them," he said.

I started a new cartoon in the place of the one destroyed. I was not well, but Joe's time was limited and I had to work. Harold pulled my bed into the middle of the studio, gave me the materials required, while Joe got into his boxing kit, then Harold went out, so as to leave us in peace to get on.

In the middle of a frenzy of struggle, charcoal and bread-crumbs all over the bedclothes, my face and hands black, a rapping came on the door—before I could stop him, Joe,

just as he was, dressed only in his trunks, had opened the door wide, disclosing the whole scene to Colonel Paynter, who had come to pay a call with several friends who to me were strangers. . . . My dignity was never tried so hard as at that moment. I did not carry off the situation at all well.

Golly was our joy and delight, a wild young thing of imagination, wit and great talent, a Basque. Her real name is Phyllis Yglesias, daughter of Yglesias the painter. She always left her home in Mousehole to join our camp when we were there. Drawing-rooms were not her haven. Sometimes she slept out on the bare earth. She could climb trees and rocks that no one ever scaled before and hang like a fly with her finger-tips from the high joists in the lean-to which we called "the kitchen." She was feather-weight, but what there was of her was all nerve and muscle.

She slept in our kitchen on a camp bed; when our Lizzie came in the morning to clean up, we knew by the awful screaming noise that she had arrived and dropped a saucepan on Golly's head as she reached over to where they were hanging, and when Ber Walke came to stay, there was the same trouble with Lizzie, who was never frightened of us, or usual visitors, but Joe terrified her, and the whole village; he created a sensation one day when Golly took him for a horse ride—some children seeing them ran away screaming: "Two cannibals are coming down the lane." Joe's scarf was streaming out behind and Golly's crinkly curls were standing out in a bush.

A tale is told of her. The rocket apparatus was out trying to rescue men from a vessel driven ashore. As the first man was coming across in the basket buoy the line jammed, he was drowning in the surf. While others hesitated, before they could stop her, our Golly went down that line hand over hand, she released the pulley and they got the whole crew ashore safely.

The morning of November 11th 1918 was one borrowed from summer. There was not a cloud in the sky; everything

was peaceful. The great doors of the studio stood wide open, sunlight streamed along the floor, Harold paced restlessly up and down. I tried to occupy my mind with trifles. We dared not hope.

At eleven o'clock we heard a vessel hooting in Penzance. Algernon Newton's house lay a little lower in the valley—"They might not have heard." I went to tell them; the door was opened by Arthur Newton. He stood for a second listening to the sirens that were then in full blast. Suddenly he broke down, he had lost both his sons.

We went to Newlyn and stayed the night at Harold Harvey's to join in the celebrations and see the fireworks from the vessels in Mount's Bay.

It was impossible to realise that the awful weight of misery was lifted. The Armistice had actually come.

CHAPTER XX

COLISEUM

IN January 1919 we decided that London should be our headquarters. I knew we were doing what was right, but could not sleep. Motors hooted in the night in place of owls. Bricks and mortar brought tears to my eyes as I stood at our window—I thought of the wild hillside and the sea-line.

We found a studio in Hampstead, where Harold painted. I went to the Ballet to work. This compensated for a great deal; I forgot my homesickness and became completely absorbed.

Diaghileff's Ballet formed part of the Coliseum bill. I had obtained permission to work behind. No outsider but myself then haunted the stage. I was there for every show.

I was impressed by the immense size of back-stage immediately on passing through the folding doors; inside was spacious as a cathedral, as orderly, as quiet. Canvases jutted at all angles; some high, lost in the oblivion of the flies, where hangings met them.

The flat horse used in children's tales cants in flat arabesque against a wall. In a corner the cardboard "midnight sun" shines golden—spots of colour in semi-obscurity and vast block of dark. Dim lights overhead pick out an ice-white pyramid of tarlatan, flirting its nebulous folds as pink satin-covered toe projects in queer posture from pool of shadow underneath. By a jagged-edged piece of scenery a man in black velvet jerkin practises his *double tours*. Dancers are loosening up for "Sylphides." Here a bored stage-hand leans against a prop. Here someone in everyday dress talks to a girl standing on her points. Here a dresser fixes the folds of some outlandish peasant skirt, on the long pleats big flowers show in gaudy brightness.

In the centre was the circle of the revolving stage. Going through the stage-door, I looked straight into a segment set for a drawing-room. Impossible to imagine that it should convince any audience; one could see so plainly that the architecture was only paint and the walls thin as paper.

I remember that first day, seeing all assemble for "Igor." The red limes were turned on; the background the curtain, incredibly large; I could not visualise its manufacture. Long lines hung straight down, cut across by a decorative half-circle line made by the pulling up cord, which I was sorry could not be seen from the front of the house.

One day I stood drawing till the last minute; not having heard the signal, I had to make a bolt for it when I heard the whirr of the curtain raised behind me. The audience must have seen me dashing across the stage.

As the orchestra had played the prelude the excitement and tension was tremendous during those last moments before the curtain rose. Then all was private behind; in a second, that thin wall of protection of cloth had disappeared, disclosing a cavern containing what seemed the whole of the rest of the human race.

Vesta Tilley, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Bouchier, Arthur Prince, Mark Hambourg and Harry Tate were on the bill. Vesta Tilley told me what a frightening stage it was, so big for one person to hold. "When you get on it," she said, "it seems a mile across." I watched her from the wings. She even walked with her feet a little apart just like a man; the detail of her impersonation was perfect. I asked her how she found men's boots small enough for her little feet. She told me, "I go into a shop and say I want a pair of shoes for my son, and when they ask what size does your son take, I say, try them on me; if they fit me, they will fit him."

Arthur Prince's dresser carried the smiling dummy and set it on a stool with greatest reverence; he had also a silk duster tucked under his arm, ready for Arthur Prince to swagger along and flick the dummy's face, while the painted eyes remained open and never blinked.

Arthur Bouchier was the first performer to show me the friendliness of asking me to go into his dressing-room.

Mark Hambourg was encored at every show. He stood up and said, "I will play you now the Rachmaninov Prelude in C Minor." Lopokova always left her room to sit in the wings to listen to him. Lopokova was then the star *ballerina*. She came to London almost unheralded and took all hearts by storm. She turned and saw me drawing her one day, and asked, "Let me see what you are doing." She spoke English well. I showed her an indifferent scribble. "If you would like to draw me, come to my dressing-room to-morrow. I will pose for you," she said.

Nervous and worried at keeping her sitting still, I was ashamed of the drawing I did. I would rather she had gone on with her practice. I wanted to watch, see things, get ideas, become familiar with all that happened. I knew it was going to take ages before I knew my subject, which was vast and held great possibilities. I spent a miserable hour in spite of her kindness.

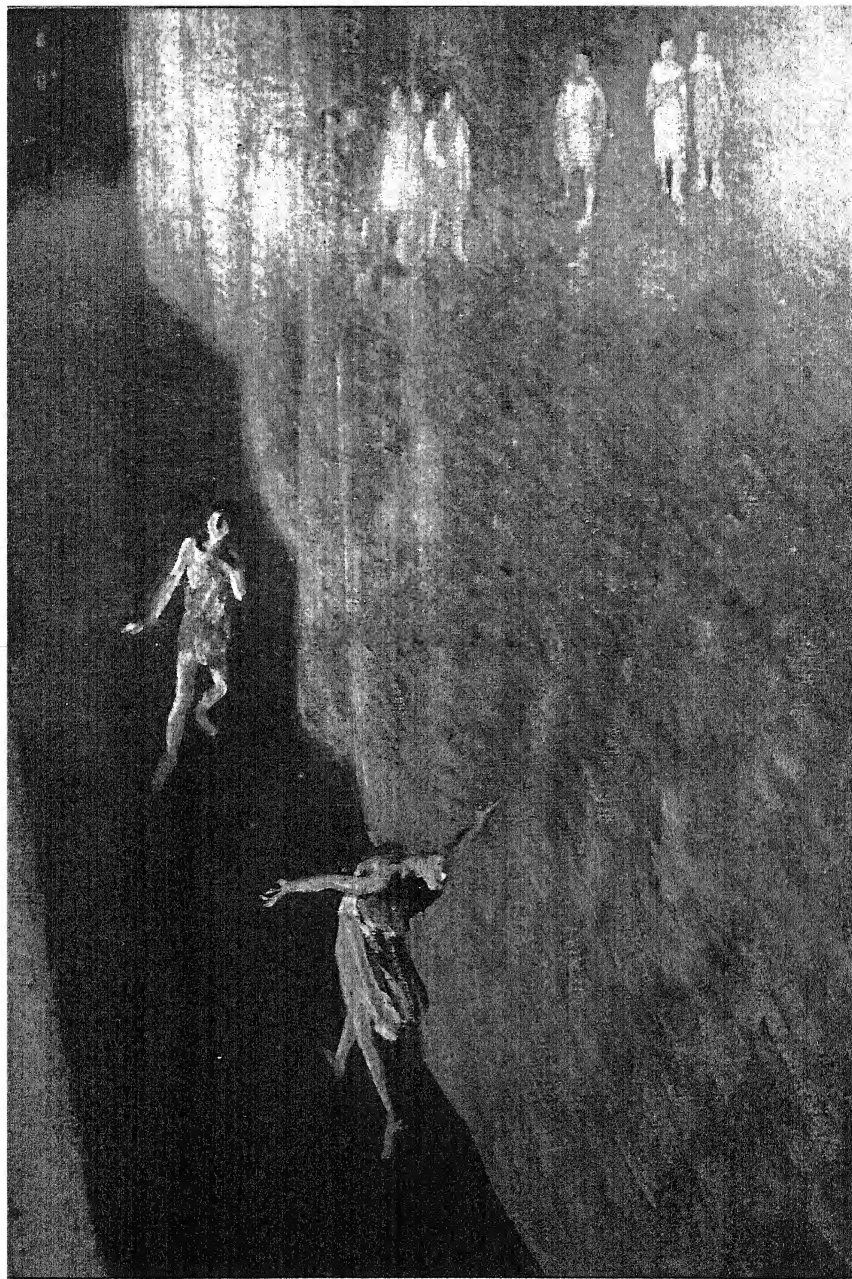
Soon Lopokova's quick understanding realised what was wanted. Her room should be my studio, she should never stay in any position on my account, she should go on with her make-up and dressing, stand in front of the long glass and go through positions and steps. We were both workers. There was to be no conversation; it was to be as if I did not exist.

The privilege she gave me was most valuable. I made enormous progress, particularly in draughtsmanship. For many months the pink walls of Lopokova's dressing-room held my interest. I sat in a corner, silent like a shadow, studying and making notes of everything that happened, from taking off the day-dress to the final fantasy.

In the glow of the electric bulbs her pale skin and hair were warm, turned to gold. The white tarlatan of her "Sylphides" dress filled the room, herself in it a sprite. The pink hoop of "Petroushka" hung on the wall. The yellow chenille embroidered dress for the "Good-humoured Ladies"



THE MAIDEN
1932



THE GAUZE CURTAIN—PAVLOVA

1920

lay over the sofa, heavy as lead in the hand. "Bakst never remembers that we have got to dance," she said. Dozens of ballet shoes were piled on one side of the dressing-table, all their pink satin strings hanging down. Sweet scent of powder and grease-paint filled the air.

Everything was glorious to paint; the contrast between the black-clothed dresser and the artificial brilliance, the character of the make-up table, its little candle to heat the eyelash black, the white enamelled furniture and the white drugget on the floor—even the old red-plush armchair was a thing of joy. Its seat bore the impress of the hundreds who had sat on it exalting in their success, they had passed on—the chair remained, extending its comforting arms to the next occupant of No. 1 Dressing-room. I was sentimental about that chair and imagined it saying, "Stars come and stars go, but I'm in the star dressing-room longer than any of them."

Roger Fry was vacating his studio in Gower Street. It was nearer the Ballet than St. John's Wood; I took it from him. It seemed impossible that it could ever be cleared, stacked as it was from floor to ceiling with canvases and odds and ends. In the middle in a tiny cleared space stood his easel, the remains of his tea on a table, all mixed up with his colours and brushes. He had thick grey hair that grew in bushy curls; his skin was dark and lined deeply; his clothes were well worn. An arresting personality. His studio was after all, never used by me, although I rented it for several quarters. Other interests became too absorbing.

Lopokova continually spoke of how much I should love the work at Cecchetti's classes at Chandos Hall. She took the first opportunity of introducing me to the *maestro* who was then actually playing parts in the Ballet. When he was on the stage in a tragic part, the hairs on my head stuck up the wrong way. I received a cordial invitation to work at any of his classes. In that way my mornings were filled.

I went with Lopokova to his seventieth birthday party given in his little flat over a tobacconist's shop in Wardour

Street, where Madame Cecchetti and he always lived when in London. We had Italian food, wine, liqueurs and coffee in the midst of a regular babel of tongues—Russian, French, Italian and English. That room became a familiar place later on, for Harold and I often dined there, when Madame Cecchetti cooked the many-course dinners; *Maestro*, as Cecchetti was always called, ate with appetite and great rapidity; we had difficulty in keeping up with him, though as far as one could judge he had only two teeth. No one could look after the *ménage* like Madame—she even washed his chemises, as she called them. “The English laundry does not make them white enough.”

He told us, “When I was young my heart was an orange; I divided it in sections and gave one here and one there.” He had a cardboard box full of spectacles to choose from, and bought fresh ones in every country he visited always hoping to find a pair that was just right, but he never visited an oculist.

He and Madame often came to our studios when we moved to Queen’s Road. Their own dishes were so specially good, that on these occasions we were hard put to cook a worthy meal. Harold once spent a whole day trying to make a mayonnaise; it would curdle, I do not know how many eggs he used; at last he got one concoction smooth, just as it was finished his pipe slipped in his teeth and all the ashes dropped into the basin—then someone else had to do it after all, his many hours’ work had worn him out. One evening an Italian friend, Pino Orioli, came to help us cook a proper Italian dinner. We had fresh spaghetti from Soho, and *solfritto*, rich and brown, which had been stewing for hours. At last we had a proper feast to offer, but—disappointment—a message came at the last moment that it was impossible for our guests to come. Thinking it a shame to have so much richness and no one to enjoy it but ourselves, we went into the highways and by-ways of St. John’s Wood to find someone to bring in and help us eat the magnificent meal, but the streets were empty.

Cecchetti taught me in the classes as one of his dancers. The positions had to be as perfect as possible for the student's sake, for Cecchetti looked through all the sketches, and seizing on some fault with avidity, probably my own, he would rush up to my unfortunate victim, wave the drawing in front of their eyes and half scream in French, "There, you see what a sight you look; your legs and arms and everything else are wrong." He pretended my drawings were infallible, just another method for his exacting criticism. No matter how big his class nothing escaped his eyes—the work was terrific; sweat poured in rivulets down the spines of the lovely girls as he sat in his armchair before the platform, whistling airs for the exercises, beating time and pointing with a thin malacca cane. His pink head shone under the electric light when he was not wearing an English "sports" cap. In the rests he went round with a red watering can, sprinkling the floor; the resin would get down the dancers' throats. He was mischievous; someone's tights would often get a few drops from the watering-can and sometimes a sly switch of the cane, a sharp cut across the shins, if he could not make the girls do what he wanted, for perfect balance and line was of the utmost importance, the least joint of a finger must be in place or it would spoil all, no matter how difficult the step or pose.

I speak so much of Cecchetti's classes because they had an immense effect on me. Perfection of balance and line became my ideal also, and I revelled in the joy of line for its own sake; the infinite possibilities of composition as exemplified by the human body in movement filled my mind. I acquired a knowledge far beyond any hoped for, a capacity for seeing the ramifications of an intricate pose and putting it down simply and speedily. "*Comme la photographie!*" Cecchetti often exclaimed as he watched me, and I never knew whether to feel flattered or no.

Later on, Cecchetti established himself in England, teaching in a big hall in Shaftesbury Avenue where he had more pupils than he knew how to take, and must have been

making a lot of money, but he and Madame still lived in Wardour Street and Madame still did the *ménage* as before. He left the Ballet as a performer, but Diaghileff had to have Madame for the "Good-humoured Ladies" on tour in Spain. The parting of these old people was touching: "The public must be served. . . ."

I drew at the classes while Madame was away. Cecchetti aged; he tired of looking after himself—he did not eat and cared only for his great pet, his cat, so his students and I took dainties to tempt him; every day we stood over him at the lunch-hour making him swallow a spoonful or two of nourishment. At last we persuaded him to see a doctor. The name of the disease Cecchetti told me in French and on returning home Harold and I looked in a dictionary—it was gangrene. . . .

We were both terrified—something must be done at once. We tried to find him. He was not at the class-room, nor at home, nor in any of the Soho haunts. When next morning I saw Cecchetti, I found it was not gangrene but anæmia.

All Cecchetti's savings had been lost in the Russian Revolution. When, by dint of working day and night, he had saved enough money, he bought a house in Milan and wrote saying he was growing lettuces, but not long afterwards he was back in the theatre.

News came of Madame's death; then he too died—in the theatre. The Cecchetti Society was founded in his memory. The tradition of perfection in dancing technique for which he was responsible is still alive.

That ballet season at the Coliseum had proved so successful that it was moved on to the Alhambra, where it filled the programme. Massine was creating a furore with his original choreography; his name was in everyone's mouth. Lopokova too was the centre of a frenzy of adoration.

The "Boutique Fantasque" came into being. Lopokova's saucy dancing of the "cancan" drove London crazy with delight.

The furore was at its height when I was attacked with a slight illness, and on recovery, with my legs still a bit wobbly, I went down to Cecchetti's class. The *maestro* rushed up, threw his arms round me, and with tears pouring down his cheeks cried, "Lopokova is gone! Find her for us, I implore you!"

At the Savoy, where she had been staying, the management was gathered in the foyer: the tale was being told over and over. If a king had died suddenly in the hotel there could not have been a greater sensation! How are the ordinary visitors faring, I wondered. Nothing else mattered at the moment, but the fact that the "idol" had vanished.

I had no idea where to go to look for her, but Diaghileff could not get it out of his mind that I knew where she was.

Early that summer I took No. 2 Queen's Road Studios in Butler's garage yard to work in, and I started work there. One day I found an envelope on the door-mat. Inside was an invitation card from Their Majesties the King and Queen to a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace.

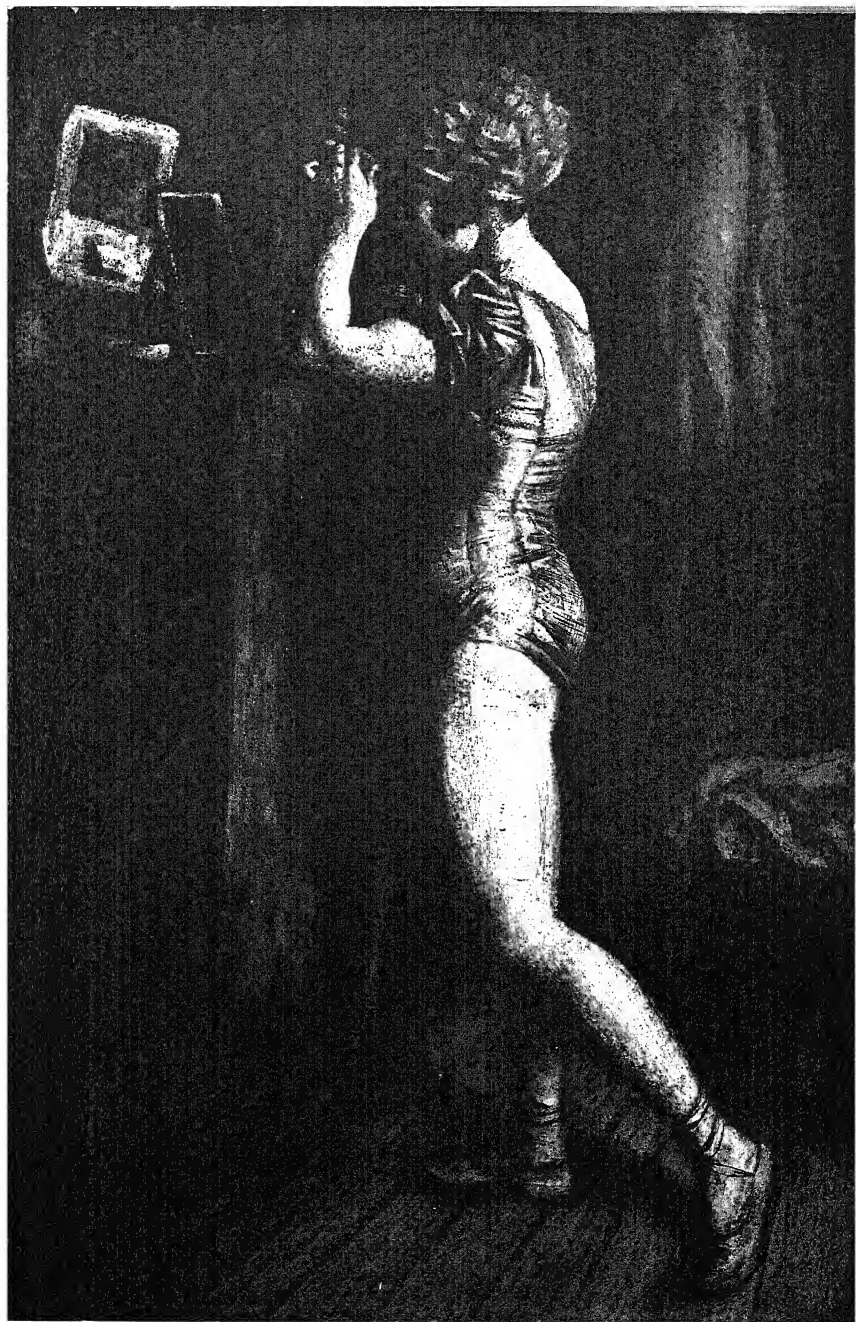
On the afternoon, Harold in his painting coat and I went on to the Finchley Road to hail a taxi. When the driver was told where to go to he looked incredulous. "Gaw'an," he said—the address Buckingham Palace had to be repeated; this destroyed my confidence.

I had never felt so complete a stranger as on this afternoon, apparently I knew not a soul. I saw a group of people; not knowing what it was about I mingled with this crowd, and suddenly found myself standing close to the King. Seeing me so near, His Majesty must have thought he knew me, for he put out his hand—I was seized with fright and started to back out. Because he had turned round everybody bobbed, then I realised I too should have bobbed, and did so after everyone else had stopped. I avoided knots of people after that.

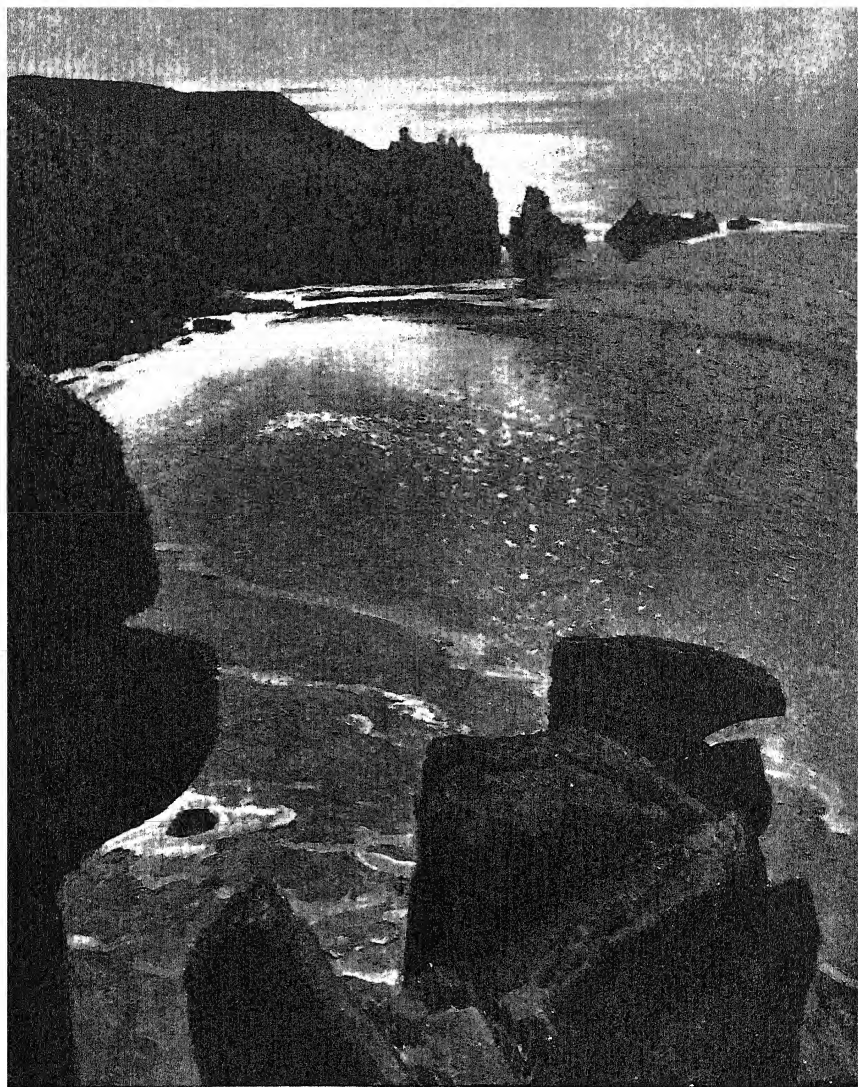
Charles Sims was in the tea-tent, taken up with his own affairs. Striding across a lawn I saw a big figure, clad

neither in morning-coat nor top-hat. It was Augustus John. "Hello, do you often come here?" he said, greeting me.

Cedric Hardwicke and I went together years ago to a Royal Garden Party, when we had four cards between the two of us, for neither his wife nor Harold had been able to come. The official was extraordinarily suspicious about these two extra cards; he was used to gate-crashers—this was a new problem.



CIRCUS DRESSING ROOM
1924



ROCKS AND SEA
1923

CHAPTER XXI

DRURY LANE

WE met W. H. Davies early in 1919, through Hamar the Icelandic poet, whom we knew at the Café Royal. The old room with its carved decorations and gilded figures had been a haunt of ours. Everyone in the artistic world was to be found there—Augustus John, Epstein, A. J. Munnings, Nina Hammet, Lillian Shelley, Betty May; every painter, sculptor and model, we all had our groups.

Harold painted two portraits of W. H. Davies and I did a drawing that he used as a frontispiece in a book of lyrics. He often came to us and we often went to his rooms in Great Russell Street. He told us once how looking up from his table he saw a mouse sitting on its hind legs on the gas cooker. The little creature was licking its front paws and washing its face with them, and the sight delighted him so much he signed to his charwoman to look and enjoy it too, she stayed still gazing for a moment, then let out an awful shriek. . . . "What on earth did you do that for?" he asked. "I thought it was going to attack us!" she answered.

One night about twelve o'clock after supper at 10 Abbey Road, he said, "There was a time when I could have made a pound between here and Great Russell Street, but I must not do it now!"

Everyone has read in his own books of his life as a tramp, a period of which he was proud. He loved the little things of life, and talked of them with a tender and moving simplicity. That he had been a master beggar was part of the game; the brilliant eyes with their long lashes made an appeal which women found hard to resist.

We went to Lamorna for the following summer, camping

in my studio as before. We had a number of visitors, and for extra accommodation bought a hut from Mrs. Shaw, Dod Procter's mother. The carpenter was taking it down when the miller's wife, Mrs. Fred Penrose from Clapper Mill, passed by, and he asked if she would prop a wall up for him, and while she was so doing, accidentally dropped one of the other walls on her dog she adored—killing him. A day or two later the carpenter brought her another dog to replace her darling. "The idea," she told me, "When I caught sight of the great ugly thing I said, 'Have him?—no, not if you clap a ten-pound note on his back!'" "

A tent was pitched in front of the studio. Bernard Walke came over in his donkey shay to join us; his beast Antony was tethered close to the door; the shay, upended by the willows, showed its one plank seat covered with a red cushion; the seat, its foot-board and axle were all that held it together. We looked a proper gipsy outfit!

Lizzie, who had worked for us before, came back in the mornings, and Pino Orioli, our Italian friend, conjured dinners out of next to nothing. Golly returned; she and I scrubbed the many saucepans that had been used, after our magnificent stews and salads were eaten.

With all my ballet notes in front of me, I experimented further in pure line, and drawing a scrawl haphazard on a piece of paper, allowed my tools to tell me what other lines used in conjunction would happily fill a space—greatest fun; lots of ideas come that way. I found the value of what I called rhythm, repetition of line, accented beat and cross rhythm, as in music.

The group of painters gathered in our studio most evenings declared it an absurd word to associate with graphic art. We argued the point for a long time. "Rhythm, what a valuable new word for an art critic!" We decided I should give it to P. G. Konody, and the result was most effective. The word was seized with avidity by the Art

Press and used in every art criticism—we had never heard it in the same connection before.

I painted that summer in Harold's studio. I always felt sleepy because of the lullaby made by the stream running over the boulders outside. One of the pictures I did there is now in the possession of Violet, Lady Melchett; she had special footlighting attached to it. The subject was Karsavina and Massine taking a call in front of the Alhambra curtain, another picture that went happily right from the start, on an absorbent ground, this time.

The years 1919 and 1920 showed a terrific output. I had all the Diaghileff Ballet studies to work from, and I had worked behind the scenes through Pavlova's season. I painted several small pictures with her in them—in front of the curtain and from the top boxes. The most important was of her hanging on to a curtain in the wings, as I often saw her do when she was panting, exhausted and wet through with sweat, from her stupendous effort.

I kept the picture for years, working on it at intervals, one of the best I had painted of its kind, but it went down to the bottom of the sea in the *Manuka* disaster off New Zealand, when several other painters lost their pictures. I have not even a photograph as record.

I painted "Assembling on the Stage for Carnival" with Cecchetti, Karsavina, Tchernecheva, Sokolova, Massine, Idjowski, Woisikowski and the *corps de ballet*. The picture is now in Manchester Art Gallery. "Sylphides from the Wings," which I painted the same year, is now at Birmingham.

These works were exhibited at the Leicester Galleries. Pavlova was photographed there standing by her own picture, "Taking a Call." Behind the scenes, she gave me every facility for studying herself; my introduction from her old *maestro*, Cecchetti, had been Open Sesame. Her ballets were being presented at Drury Lane and I went there regularly to work behind the scenes. I only had one trouble, she could never understand that I could possibly be interested in any subject there but herself.

One day I discovered the *corps de ballet* dressing-room at the top of the long flight of stone steps. I had been enthusiastic about what I saw from the wings, in a moment all forgotten in the upper story room that was crowded with girls in every stage of dress and undress from bare body and tights to "ready." Down the centre ran a rack from which hung costumes of every kind and colour. The walls were plain red brick and mortar uncovered with plaster, and here and there some past artiste had tried to cover the sordidness with patches of wall-paper. The mirror she had used still leant against the dirty and torn scraps. Along the make-up shelf that ran all round was every variety of looking-glass, some framed in ornate chipped gilt, some in white enamel, others with no frame at all and with a corner of the glass broken.

On a broken chair a sylph sits, her bare back glowing in the strong electric light, as, with hand-mirror close to her face, she tips each eyelash with a lump of black. The old gas brackets are still in their original places, the wire cages round the jet that had flared years before. Pinned round the looking-glasses are photographs and telegrams; garlands hang from corners of the frames, wigs and queer head-dresses hang from nails.

All is hurry and scurry. Here a girl steps into a ring of tarlatan held by a worn-faced dresser, her skinny arms a contrast to the fair body and clean modelling of the young athletic legs, their beauty accentuated by the sheen on the silk tights. Here a bulky figure, a real London Cockney type, hair drawn back tight from a curly fringe, hooks the back of a magnificently embroidered satin frock that trails on the ground, the high head-dress above it dwarfs all else. The dressers have seen years of service in that small room; "Duckie" and "Dearie" come with easy familiarity to their lips—the same endearment used to the last lot that would again be used to the next and the next after them. Panto—opera—ballet—just another crowd to hook up and peel.

For the time I forgot Pavlova. The rest of my life's work

was going to be about that room, and I was working like a maniac one night when a message was delivered that shocked me, and for a moment I felt like walking out: "Madame Pavlova asks will Mrs. Knight please confine her attention to the stage."

In the summer of 1920 W. H. Davies came down with us to Lamorna.

If our studio had resembled a gipsy encampment before, it then became a real one. Hope Johnson joined us, pitched another tent and practised his flute, accompanied by howls from a greyhound, an uninvited guest. Ber Walke's donkey and cart were often there. Golly, barefooted and wild of hair, built a sleeping-hut for herself out of packing-cases. We cut the undergrowth, disclosing the glades as Ernest had done years before, but this time our object was not beauty but utility; we wanted the wood. Davies was the king of bonfire-makers, we had one every night, when all the neighbours came.

Davies was head man of those fires, no one else must touch so much as a twig: at a certain hour a match was applied, at certain instants the flame flamed, glowed, and died—he could time it to a nicety; one night, just when a smouldering state was reached, Bobby Newton gave the wood a kick to liven it up. Davies instantly threw down his tools—all was ruined.

The crowd of us lay round our bonfires; the rats came out of the wild land for the warmth—you could see their bright eyes in the surrounding darkness. Lizzie Trigg, our Cornish maid, was furious, she said we encouraged them and that "they ran around like little horses!"

Algernon Newton's children always came to our bonfires, and Pauline and Joy often posed for me on the rocks; it is Joy in the little picture Mrs. Robert Mayer has now. Both the girls were a lovely pair of long-legged colts, full of mischief. When trippers were inquisitive and came too close, we pretended to be a party of lunatics—I possessed a

loud, vulgar laugh that could be turned on any time, most effective; the children delighted in it.

Many studies were done in the Cove itself that year, which resulted in a picture called "Lamorna Cove," the little bay being turned to gold by the reflection of the sun shining on the cliff above. The quay and the Crane were in shadow on the right, children were swimming and diving in the water. It was an excessively bright canvas and was actually executed from studies during one black foggy week by electric light in No. 2 Queen's Road Studios, the following winter. It was in the Royal Academy and I exhibited it again last year at the Society of Women Artists.

Mrs. Clara Asher Lucas, whom I often used to meet on the stage, rehearsed with Diaghileff's Ballet and played the piano in the orchestra. Just turning into our gate at No. 10 Abbey Road one day I saw a little lady coming along; her handbag seemed bigger than herself, and I stopped to look at so unusual a sight, it was "Luckie." She came in and had tea with us. Through that chance meeting we met many musicians.

One Sunday afternoon at her house, among the crowd of people gathered there, was a small dark young man and a beautiful dark-haired young girl. Leighton, Luckie's younger son, then a dancer in the Ballet, pressed this young man to play the piano—I was tremendously impressed. He was Rae Robertson and the girl Ethel Bartlett. That was about a year before they married. We became fast friends soon after, and for years, until success took them abroad so much, our home was theirs whenever they wanted to come.

It was while they lived in a little flat in Gower Street that they studied the Brahms variations of the Haydn theme, their first double piano work. Rae had been playing solo and teaching, Ethel concerto with John Barbirolli. I believe Harold and I were the first people to whom they played the Brahms. They "tried it on the Dog"; we were "the Dog" for years.

It has been great to watch their rise in the firmament of stars and to remember that we heard the beginnings.

Both Harold and I have worked a great deal from Ethel, but I must mention specially one oil of mine which is now at Southport Art Gallery which particular work marked a change of outlook, for the study of the simple lines of her beauty took me completely by storm. I believe that almost all the work I did for a time—even when the subject was an entirely different one—had something of Ethel in it. A man told me once that Ethel looked too much like the sort of girl you just couldn't help falling in love with. . . . I can imagine that to be true.

One winter I went with some friends to Olympia. I took a sketch-book. We sat in the cheap seats right high up at the back. After that I went again and again. From the notes I painted my first circus picture; the subject was a man in evening dress on the slack wire, the audience forming a background.

I met C. B. Cochran a year or two ago at a reception he gave for "La Argentina." He told me he had that particular picture of a man on the wire. He said he had always loved circuses and that he considered a circus artiste the most highly trained of all.

A porter at Paddington Station was the cause of my serious work at circuses. It happened that while waiting there to meet a train we started talking, and he told me, "If you want to see a real old-fashioned circus, and a good one, go to Islington." I noted the address—Agricultural Hall—and went there at the first opportunity.

I drew everything in sight from Salt and Saucy the elephants to the trapeze artistes in their dressing-rooms, and made many friends—Mr. Swallow, Johnny Regan, Randy, Comical Walker—my introduction to the "inside." I see Johnny Regan every year now at the Circus People's Reunion Dinner and we always sit together. Mr. Swallow, too, is always there. Poor Randy died about a year ago.

He had clowned on a road show I was with for many months. He is in many of my pictures, the little thin man generally wearing crimson satin trousers and a pale blue shirt. He was playing O'Gust when I first knew him, but started life on the high trapeze, and had a fall that cracked his skull; he had a hole in his head big enough to put several fingers in. He was rather proud of it.

I received a card from Gert Harvey at Newlyn the summer after I started at Islington. On it were photographs of Salt and Saucy and a note saying, "You ought to be here painting these elephants; they are marvellous." The show had been visiting Penzance.

It was very cold in the mornings at the Agricultural Hall when I went to draw the ponies. I made the big black cape that I am supposed always to wear, expressly to keep me warm, and it was convenient to work in.

Between shows I went to a Lyons' Café for meals and drew there from memory. I washed the black carbon pencil off my face and hands in the underground lavatory close by, which was marked "Women." "Ladies" in the West End.

One Saturday evening there was a real Cockney type having a good clean-up in the bowl alongside mine. She was a fine subject to paint! Her bodice off, white chemise, strong arms, and workwoman's hands towelling her skin till it shone and combing her wetted hair out in front of the glass. I lingered, watching. We got into conversation. This woman took a fancy to me and invited me to "go on the bust" and "go the rounds" with her that evening. I would have loved to do so, for the sake of experience and what I might see of folk life, a special interest of mine at the time, but I was afraid of what I might be landed into. Seeing me hesitate she said, "Don't mind if you haven't got the money. I'll stand treat for both; I'm not short to-night."

CHAPTER XXII
BIRMINGHAM "REPERTORY"

CAMPING in the studio in Lamorna, delightful as it was, was not exactly a holiday, so we had a sale and another bonfire clearance. We left with many regrets and went instead to Sennen Cove for the next summer months, where we found a hut for a studio and for Golly to sleep in, on a camp bed, with the whole Atlantic for her bath. Sometimes I helped her put the spots on her puppy dogs and other toys that she sold to the London shops; there was always a long row of dangerous animals on the window sill, set there to dry.

We ate at the hotel and Harold and I slept in what had been a coastguard's look-out with windows nearly all round, right at the edge of a cliff, where the spray often came right over and splashed on the roof—I adored the sound of it when in bed at night. We had to go to our door very carefully when there was a gale and it was dark; sea slopped over and you never knew what was coming or what power there might be in it.

We stayed right into the winter, glorying in our wild perch, doing immense quantities of work.

The long stretches of cliff, sand, sea and sky that under the sweep of cloud shadow presented each moment a different aspect were a never-ending source of delight.

We had great parties at the hotel sometimes, all presided over by Guy Dollman of the British Natural History Museum and his wife Violet. Guy found some Spanish wine in Penzance—all our young friends came and we went a bit mad.

George and Ruth Manning-Saunders lived down in the village with their two children. The little girl Joan was then

an elfish little thing with the brightest red hair that was ever given to mortal; she already wrote poetry which, I was told, showed a strange imagination; her drawings had the same remarkable quality.

George knew the fishermen intimately. We spent many evenings in his cottage with one or two of them, singing songs of hundreds of years ago, handed down from parent to child. It took a lot of coaxing and a lot of beer. . . .

That winter, when back in London, I had such a collection of unexhibited canvases gathered together that arrangements were made with Newstub to hold an exhibition at the Alpine Galleries, for no other was big enough. The opening date we fixed for the beginning of May—little enough time ahead for all I had to do—framing and further work on some of the pictures. But it came to pass that I should have even less time than I thought, for an opportunity of exceptional character arose, too good to miss—that of making my first visit to America.

One morning, Homer St. Gaudens, then a stranger, called at my studio to ask whether I would act as one of the two European representatives on the Jury of Awards for the International Exhibition of Pictures held yearly at the Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg. I remember exactly what he said: "I have been round making inquiries and you've had less bricks thrown at you than anyone else." He would not take my refusal when I explained about my show: "Think it over—I'll call to-morrow—you may be sorry—you'd have a great time!" After all I could not miss such a chance—I just had to go.

Pittsburg was forgotten when, in the midst of frenzied work one day, a journalist who had come to take some Press photographs knocked on my door. He used up many plates and then said, "Now I want you making a dress." "Why?" I asked—"I don't make dresses." "Don't you design dresses?" he persisted, and "Aren't you the Marquise de Tournay d'Oisy?" His face fell when I assured him

that most certainly such was not the case, he was most terribly chagrined—"Haven't you ever done anything that would be worth writing about in the papers, so I can make up a tale?" he implored. At the moment I could think of nothing, and as we stayed talking over his awful loss, I tried hard to think of some way of helping him—he was so young and seemed so distressed. He had just left, when suddenly I had an inspiration, and he heard me bellow "Stop!" before he rounded the corner. He raced back up the steps, two at a time, for he could see by my face his difficulty was over. I had thought of Pittsburg. . . . "This is going to make a better story than the Marquise, I'm jolly glad I made the mistake," he exclaimed when I told him all. In this way came my first personal publicity.

The Marquise was a furniture-and-dress designer living at No. 3 who had been in the public eye recently.

This happened after I had moved to No. 1 and Harold to No. 2 Queen's Road. I preferred No. 1, because in it was a beautiful iron spiral staircase leading to an attic above, so nice and common, all curls and twists up the banisters. I wanted to paint a picture of legs coming down it seen through the twirligigs, but I never did. We lived half in one place and half in the other, and Harold had always to go along the balcony in his dressing-gown to fetch our early morning tea from the tiny kitchen in No. 1; our dining-room, too, was there, but we slept in No. 2. We were proud of our mugs, picked up in various places, from them we drank our tea instead of using cups and saucers—one piece to wash up instead of two!

It happened just before we went there to live that Gert Harvey and her husband were staying with us at 10 Abbey Road, and Gert, in her generous way, insisted on helping with all the painting and whitewashing that Harold and I were doing—a nice way of spending her London holiday, but she wanted to make "all fitty" as the Cornish would say. Right in the middle of the disturbance, Her Royal

Highness Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, wrote to say she was coming to see me about some posters I had promised to do for Waterloo Hospital. My studio at No. 2 was hastily put in temporary order, and no matter what we did it would not look as if anyone had ever used it, even though we hung palettes on the wall and dotted studies here and there—just as if I had been interrupted in the middle of important work—like making up a theatrical set. . . . I have often been ashamed of an untidy studio, but this was much too clean to be convincing, and our recent activities so evident, and the smell of paint so strong that I had to confess all to Her Highness. I think she was amused—we had a most interesting talk about whitewash.

The morning before she came our old landlord, Mr. Butler, looking smart in his Homburg hat, went on his knees on our steps and, with an old dinner-knife in his hand, plastered up the worst holes to prevent Her Highness from tripping up. The poor old man's white beard nearly touched his work, for he was almost blind; owing to his failing sight he could not see how badly our roofs needed repairing. Once when we were giving a dinner-party our guests arrived in a deluge of rain, and as they passed our kitchen door, I opened it to show Mrs. Byfield frying fish under an open umbrella. The humour was not appreciated, our guests were only sorry for us. Mrs. Byfield was a great sport; she gave us racing tips—I was lucky that year and won fifteen pounds. All the neighbouring bookies used to send round to ask "Which horse does Mrs. Knight fancy?" Mrs. Byfield had three of the loveliest daughters whom both Harold and I have painted in many pictures.

Barry Jackson came to stay with us; he slept in the tiny attic at the top of my spiral staircase and bathed in the morning in an enamel tub into which he could only get one foot at a time. We often went to Birmingham to stay with him at the Grange, his father's old home, full of super-sized mahogany furniture and Victorian pictures in gold frames, a comfortable, old-fashioned house, a luxurious

contrast in appearance to his Repertory Theatre, where all was plainness itself, the last word in modernity.

He and I often drew on his billiard-table. Stacks of paper, pencils, paints and brushes were always ready on the holland cover, on which I worked out many ideas. We spent many days, too, at rehearsals in the theatre, when I made studies. I loved, too, to go into the scene-painting workroom and get lumps of half-dry colour out of the buckets and draw on spare pieces of board.

We saw the first production of "The Immortal Hour" at the "Rep.," and before we went Barry said, "The girl who is taking the part of Etain holds me—I can't take my eyes off her. I wonder what you'll think." It turned out to be Gwen Ffrangcon Davies—I think her first big part—a sensation later in London when she became the rage and everyone boasted how many times they had been to see her.

Her "Etain" dress was enormously admired, although Paul Shelving, when he was doing the decorations and costumes could get nothing for her to his liking; but by chance, one day, he noticed an old rag on the floor that had been used for wiping paint-brushes; the splashes of blue, green, silver and gold that covered it gave just the colour he wanted, so a temporary dress was made up of the dirty old cotton stuff, a paint-rag which proved so successful that she wore it all through the run, both in Birmingham and London. Never was a gown so suitable for a part, it looked marvellous, unearthly, although the hems were never sewn.

Those were great days at the "Rep."—days of high endeavour when Barry paid the losses out of his own pocket and considered himself well rewarded if the work done was good.

Cedric Hardwicke came to the "Repertory," and I remember him well in a curate's part. Barry had said much the same about him as about Gwen.

BOOK IV

CHAPTER XXIII

AMERICA

PAINTING, theatre, circus, ballet and concerts became so mixed up it is impossible to remember consecutive events.

To return to the Pittsburg Carnegie Institute. It was Homer St. Gaudens' first year as assistant director. He had chosen Lucien Simon from Paris and me from England to go to America as European representatives. Charles Curran and Charles Woodbury, the American painters, crossed the Atlantic to help judge the work on this side. They, Homer and I went to join Simon in Paris to judge the pictures there—the first duty involved; we saw works both intensely interesting and crazy.

We visited Simon and met his wife. Madame Simon dreaded her husband's long journey to America. She made me promise to look after him and see that he wore his overcoat when it was cold. We went to the Folies Bergères whenever possible. I was keen to draw there, I never did so much work in any theatre in a short time, and the audience was so strongly marked in character in comparison with that of an English theatre. I painted several pictures and did two or three etchings from the notes. It was hateful leaving Paris when time came for us to go.

Back in London I worked like a maniac up till the last moment getting all ready for my exhibition to be hung while I was away—no time to think of clothes.

At six o'clock on the evening before starting, I had done no packing. Two friends who came in to help me, Emily and Toss Janssen, asked, "Where is your afternoon dress?" I had not thought of it. That night we cut and made up a length of Indian embroidery, originally bought for a model.

Harold saw me off at eight o'clock the next morning—my luggage, two small suit-cases. Homer had begged us to bring as little as possible. We were to travel fast and light in America.

That dress was a great success; I wore it for years. On the boat a lady just back from India introduced herself on its account and told me it was a very rare piece. I did not tell her where and how it had been slung together, nor how I had bought the material for ten shillings in an antique shop.

Simon and I travelled *de luxe* on the *Olympic*. I had a deck cabin. It was rough weather when I went aboard; the deck steward thought I was mad when I insisted on his pulling a long chair out of shelter right into the wind and rain. Wrapped in my old musquash coat I slept till we reached Cherbourg, as rested as after a month's holiday. Simon boarded the vessel there. All through the voyage both he and I drew. My sketches proved useful for several pictures. One, of the emigrants on the lower deck, Dr. Kodak Gregory has now.

Simon knew nothing of English present-day painters; he had never even heard of John, whose work I found hard to describe. Orpen was then better known in France.

I kept my promise to Madame and went to Simon's cabin to help him pack his enormous trunk which proved a nightmare to Homer: when the weather was cold and Simon should have been made to wear his overcoat it was always missing, packed in the box that was hundreds of miles away. In it there were three grades of coats provided by Madame for every climate. Simon, ashamed that he, a man, should have more luggage than I, sloughed the incubus and travelled with a hand-bag.

Early morning on deck, we see the Liberty Statue, a lonely figure in stretch of lumpy water, coldly blue in the new day not fully lit.

Into smoother water: the sky in cloudless serenity of lemon and rose lightens and lightens. Detail fused in



BANK HOLIDAY
(*Aquatint*)
1923



FIVE CLOWNS

1926

pearly mist, New York appears on a strip of land—rocky coast of towering blocks, the skyscrapers, irregular crenellations.

Like little sucking fish hanging on to a great whale, tugs point slantwise along our length of hull, all chug-chugging in V-shaped spread on the oily flow, brownish, tinged with green.

As from high hill-top, we look into the black circles of funnels below, emitting clouds of smoke and fumes that blur in queer wiggle-woggle the decks below.

I would have loved to make a study of the little plebs guiding the stately monarch past miles of dock, past other craft; behind, the buildings piled in still greater jerk of height.

Homer is at the Olympic Dock to welcome us—a confusion of suit-case corners, of pushing elbows and shoulders of efficiency determined to be first through the customs, hard-mouthed officials—a foreign tongue, enormous size of everything. On the luggage escalator, as wide as Piccadilly, my cases are a pair of fleas on a mammoth's back.

Everyone in such a tearing bustle, only a moment passes before the vast dock is again empty and ourselves hustled into a car—so much to see in our fourteen days' visit to the States—only three days can be spared for New York. All is planned to schedule from early morning till late at night.

"You can have five minutes to powder your nose," says Homer. "I have a car ready to drive you round New York."

The brassy day discloses a close-packed mountainous city of bricks and concrete. In engulfing shadow the people in the streets appear but tiny mechanical dolls, the cars mere crawling insects.

Up Fifth Avenue, past stores like all London's shops packed into one, we run into a district sparsely filled with mansions and I see beyond a tree-covered cliff.

Back we go to Brooklyn's swinging line of bridge and the

Aquarium a mile away. Homer, watch in hand, drags Simon away from the beauty of fish swimming in their tanks. Woolworth Building next, then the highest, a collection of Westminster Abbeys piled brick-like, one on top of another. "*Merveilleux*," Simon says the view is from the top, when he and Homer rejoin me below; I was too cowardly to face the express lift's drop; I had lost my land legs, the pavement would wave up and down.

At the Ladies' Club, where Homer, for convention's sake, obtained gracious permission for me to stay, I might have been in Spain, for its white walls, precious furniture, and *objets d'art*. A foreigner I felt there; the enormous breakfast grape-fruit and the best coffee I had ever tasted poured hot over cream! No one stayed still a moment—chambermaids appeared and vanished as mice do. I could not understand a word they said.

The club was forbidden ground for photography. A pressman meeting with a stern refusal put me into a taxi and took me to an hotel to do his work. Without asking leave we marched upstairs to a small balcony; through open balustrading we looked into a hall below, where a fencing tournament was in progress.

My Russian boots, then an English vogue, intrigued the photographer; after taking them from all angles, dense volumes of smoke collected. He was still flashing powder and I smiles, when many angry people came to tell us "get out": our smoke had stopped the contest below, a very important one.

We were sumptuously fêted: dinner and luncheon-parties—triumphal everywhere for Simon; so many had been his pupils. Cecilia Beaux held a reception for us to meet the New York painters and critics. I wore my Indian dress; I thought it chic with my patent-leather Russian boots, till a lady said, "What charming rubber over-shoes those are you're wearing."

We went to the Hippodrome. Four full-grown elephants did an act; they looked no bigger than mice on such an

enormous stage. Simon, captivated with the limelight on the grey, the patches of pink and spotty ears that two of them had, wanted to go again with a sketch-book. By those peculiarities I recognised the beasts again, five years ago, in the ring at Olympia—Power's elephants.

At Mrs. Havemeyer's house we were shown into a room hung round with Rembrandts and Franz Hals; among them an early work of the former master's stood out, by reason of its extraordinarily sensitive and subtle modelling. Simon and I kept getting up from our seats to peer, trying to find the secret of that blooming, living use of paint, our glasses of golden Tokay wine forgotten. We thought we had seen all when Mrs. Havemeyer rose and said, "Now I will show you my pictures."

We went through ornate door and grid into a gallery, to see a collection which might have graced a capital city. Not knowing at which masterpiece to look—not knowing it was there, nor even its existence—I came upon El Greco's "Toledo." I was shaken to the very core, and before recovery came I saw his "Cardinal" in the puce cape, hanging on the end wall. Two finest examples from the hand of imagination that on plain reality could build all things known and unknown. Those two pictures have never left me.

Wonderful Goyas too she had, and a room filled from floor to ceiling with Degas in all his phases. Manets, Monets, Berthe Morisot, and a host of the French impressionists were represented on a stairway's wall.

Mrs. Havemeyer was telling of her friend, Berthe Morisot writing of fine work done, how she would take the first boat to Europe to see it or some coveted Master that was coming on the market. She loved her treasures. I wish there were more Mrs. Havemeyers! I wish, too, that we could have spent days at her house, but again Homer put his hand in his waistcoat pocket—"other things to see."

Of the Fricke collection I remember Rembrandt's "White Horse" and El Greco's young man in his favourite

scheme, yellow, puce and green. Again I came away the richer.

Mrs. C—— had the largest diamond I had seen, hanging from a chain; it emitted light of itself in the darkness of a Spanish palace, brought from across the water, brick by brick, timber by timber. Round was built a modern shell in Fifth Avenue. What had been the courtyard was covered with a carved and panelled roof. Handsome balustrades and balconies led to rooms beyond, all lit both day and night by hundreds of gilt and painted candles. "In what capacity did you work there?" a serving-man was asked. "As third candle-man," he replied, giving his reference to the Boston lady who told me.

The mansion, filled with priceless works of art, was a museum of beauty, interest and modern convenience—marble baths of Grecian shape—push a bedside button to open a window, a room filled with cupboards—enough dresses for fifty women. Yet, beyond all words that house was sad—the only child, a son, had recently died.

In Boston, snow covered the streets and roofs of the old Georgian houses. It was freezing hard, and so clear that all distance looked close. We went into the tropics when we were shown into Mrs. Jack Gardner's imported Italian courtyard; the sun poured through the glass roof that enclosed the pink-washed walls and balconies, the centre filled with palms and flowers.

Mrs. Gardner, we were told, had herself gone up the scaffolding to superintend the erection and find the exact shade of faded colour, stain and look of age, uncanny in an exotic Midas atmosphere. Poor people had been born, had lived their lives, and had died in that picturesque relic, the balconies hanging over some narrow street.

Through gallery-like room after room—miles it seemed—between cords to keep the public from inspecting too carelessly masterpiece after masterpiece, we walked in haste, no time to spend more than a moment before each picture; even a lovely Botticelli could have no more than a glance.

Mrs. Jack Gardner, sitting in an enormously wide chair set on a dais, her black draperies spread out all round her and something black on her head, looked a Rembrandt picture herself. We had been shown into her private suite a few moments before we were expected. Her lunch-tray in front of her, she was gnawing a chicken-bone, held in her hands.

From Boston, on a static bitter day, we motor many miles, all so tightly packed, befurred and berugged, we can scarce turn our heads to see the wooded country, black clump of bush and tree-branch upholstered as with cotton wool; above, a grey sky is laden with more snow to come.

Past wide expanse of land we go, unbroken soft-modelled white, past wooden unfenced shack and farm, we reach a lonely village; Homer stops the car and while all waiting round a red-hot stove in a small town restaurant, clams are fried. Back in the car we eat them out of their greasy paper bag; india-rubber dainties that taste good, for we are hungry. The going has been heavy; we shall have little time to spend at Mr. Woodbury's studio.

A log fire is there ready laid; we set a match to the paper underneath and spread our lunch on table and model throne while examining canvases of many stormy and sunlit seas. The ocean itself is just beneath the walls, right on the coast of Maine. Homer says the flat rock at the beach's edge is granite; it looks too slaty-smooth to me. From among the foreign sea-refuse that crowds the shingle we pick some oval half clam shells to write upon, autographed souvenirs to exchange among ourselves.

Snow or no snow, we hurtle home, through the falling dark—we must attend a dinner-party that very night.

We stalk through Boston, through Harvard Museums, as if dinosaurs' skeletons ninety feet long were to be found in every street. "I'll give you two minutes to walk to the end of its tail and round," says Homer. We stalk past miles of precious books, bronzes, marbles, mural

decorations; through a room full of unique Chinese portraits, all life size; past huge gilt and painted Buddhas, while Homer, like a cuckoo from its clock, strikes the hour to collect his straying fledglings and shoo them to the next marvel and still the next.

Days are spent on trains swinging through wild country, the coarse track-side grass parched grey-brown, through miles of spindly trees, many bent and broken after the storm that lately swept that waste; in a break we see for a flash distant mountainous line, or shine of water, vast expanses without human sign.

A night in a sleeping car: double tiers of bunks down each side of a long corridor, a hall of curtained mystery of sleeping men and women. Homer, Simon and I sit each on our bed's edge and hold a whispered talk and listen to a snore that comes in ecstatic rattle from a bunk above. I pull my curtain close and undress. I pack my clothes in the net above, and put all money safe under my pillow. In the middle of a shattering dream I wake to see a darkie's face hanging over me and feel his fingers on my shoulder shaking me awake; we are close to Pittsburg. I put on my clothes and stockings again, sure I shall roll out half dressed.

On the platform a host of pressmen wait. Homer tells them "We must have a bath and breakfast first!"

Homer had given me so many warnings to be careful what I say, I am completely dumb to the bombardment: "What are your impressions of America?" "Wonderful," is all I can reply.

I felt dishevelled and was nervous; they must have thought I was stupid.

We were entertained and feasted at Pittsburg in the royal and generous way that the Americans have; to them hospitality and friendliness is almost a religion.

We judged the awards at the Institute. We arranged the French and English galleries, my first experience of hanging an exhibition. We were tired that night when we had finished and late for a dinner-party at Mr. and Mrs. Beatty's

house afterwards. I knew Mr. Beatty well by correspondence. He wrote charming letters to painters and made them feel they were doing the Exhibition a favour in sending work.

We spent the whole of one night at the Carnegie Steel Works. Homer said, "Put on old clothes and shoes, you may tread on some red-hot steel by accident." I had no spare clothes in my two small suit-cases.

It was an inferno that we walked into. First glimpse showed us an enormous gable-end, it had a great hole on the second story; Hell was inside, full of red and black bodies. Huge stacks of chimneys reared, out of them volumes of reddened smoke poured.

We looked through smoked glasses into cauldrons where iron bubbled like porridge. A cauldron was tipped, the white-hot metal formed a pool and ran away in a searing stream. We saw blocks of steel placed under a gigantic piece of machinery and rolled into sheets for a ship's sides. As the salt was thrown the noise was disintegrating as dropping bombs. Homer told me that women were not usually taken to see that particular process, they are apt to turn hysterical.

The size, the blaze, the heat of those miles and miles of burning activity were both terrifying and exciting, an experience that I would not have missed. We walked through shop after shop. Here was the mould for the pigs, here a pile of red-hot pigs, here red-hot sheets of steel on the ground; I had to look where I walked in my famous Russian boots. Everywhere men rushed about drenched with sweat. Big openings gaped in the walls everywhere, showing velvet blackness outside. We crossed a yard and through the lurid pall of smoke overhead I saw one faint star shining.

The weather turned warm when we went to Washington; the almond trees were coming into bloom round the lake. There were miles of campers with cars parked outside the city.

The Abraham Lincoln Memorial had recently been erected. We read his wonderful words on the wall inside. We visited George Washington's house and saw the hole cut in the bottom of his bedroom door to let his cat through. We motored to a country club and sat on the tennis-courts and talked and slept. We visited Rock Green Cemetery to see the Adams' monument that Homer's father, Augustus St. Gaudens had modelled. We rushed from place to place, living day and night. The weather turned to summer heat—we had a warm journey back to New York. I drew Simon in the railway carriage with his clothes loosened, and gave the sketch to Homer.

Homer found we had been in fourteen different States in ten days.

We were a little jaded when we reached New York! The thermometer was then registering nearly ninety degrees in the shade.

When we said good-bye to Homer on board *La France*, Simon surprised him by kissing both his cheeks. Homer would have kissed me good-bye, but he was afraid it would shock Simon.

Simon's name was magic on the French boat. We sat at the Captain's table—I was not his sole companion as on the *Olympic*. When I parted from him at Le Havre I parted with a dear friend; it had been a joy to be with him, a great enthusiast and an ideal companion. At times when Homer and I were dead beat Simon was still alive to the tiniest detail of experience; nothing escaped his notice.

He admired the American; I remember what he said about him: "*Si grand, si rose, si luisant!*"

Crossing, we had two or three days' bad weather. *La France* rolled; I had to wedge myself in my bed with the bolster, pillows and bedding from the spare bed in my cabin. One night I thought the ship would never right herself, she paused so long at the bottom of a roll, while all my clothes stood out from the pegs at stiff angles, as on rods. I enjoyed the bad weather; it was exhilarating.

One night everyone slid down the dancing floor. It was comic to see the Corinthian columns leaning over in an entirely different direction from the people.

My coat was torn off my back and my suit-cases wrenched away by the crowd of French people who rushed aboard at Le Havre to welcome the returned travellers.

Simon and I made all sorts of plans to meet again soon. I have never seen him since.

I felt an experienced traveller crossing the Channel, and wanted to tell everyone that I had just returned from America.

Harold was at Waterloo. We went back to Queen's Road, where breakfast was ready. The sun streamed into our tiny dining-room as we sat for hours after breakfast while I poured out my experiences. I told of the treasures, the riches and luxury. We roared with laughter. I had returned to a home denuded of anything that money could be raised on—all our trifling bits of silver and jewellery had gone to the pawnshop.

CHAPTER XXIV
THE INDISCREET CAT

NEXT day was Private View of my exhibition at the Alpine Galleries. Harold had hung it and sent out invitations, and E. V. Lucas had written a foreword with a title of which he was proud: "From Diaghileff to the Land's End."

It was by far the most important show I had held, but the sales were disappointing. Newstub became more and more depressed as the weeks went by. When the exhibition closed my studio was so full I could hardly move in it.

Most of those pictures have been sold since, but it is a bad day when a stack comes back. Yet something drives one on to produce more. The old ones are face to the wall—forgotten part of the wall itself.

We went to Sennen Cove again that year. With the El Greco landscape constantly before my eyes, I concentrated on the study of rocks and cliffs. I have a love of the granite blocks that border that coast, their poise is a study that never palls. Their dramatic possibilities in combination with the sea and sky fitted well with my mood, which was attuned to the "trenchant" work we had seen. I pinched that French word from Simon; and Harold got sick to death of hearing it, because I was then aiming for the dramatic.

Harold and I stayed late in the season and worked until nearly all our money was gone. We both had commissions to execute in London.

We saved a cat's life and adopted it one day when it was being tied in a sack with stones to be dropped in the sea.

The morning we left was wild. The car to take us to Penzance came late, the radiator boiled when it got to the top of the hill, we thought we should be blown over as the

gale seized the hood and made it rattle and flap, the rain slashed in sheets, the cat never stopped yelling as we raced to catch our train.

We were to have moved in two days' time, but to our horror, Langford Place instead of being ready as promised, was in a state of disintegration: paint half scraped, papers half off, and full of dirt, ladders, paint-pots, buckets and whistling workmen, our landlady's own, who having just started the redecoration were living there.

We had given up one of our Queen's Road studios and all the gear had been moved into No. 1, the whole of which was so fully packed that we could not turn round in it. Everything was dirty and cold beyond description. We shut the door on the misery and went to dine at the Isola Bella—with Homer and Cottie St. Gaudens, who were in London.

It was a black, foggy day, pouring with rain, when we moved whatever we could spare to Langford Place, stacking it in the middle of one of the rooms. I cannot remember a more depressing day. Harold had an attack of 'flu, and there was nowhere for him to be out of draughts and fog. Our new cat, unused to indoors, was indiscretion itself.

Two days afterwards Harold developed pneumonia. I hauled a bed from the attic down the spiral staircase, put it in the front of the studio fire and sent for a doctor.

Neither of us could do our commissions, money went on expenses; but for the help of Kenneth and Jean Forbes, who had taken the studio next door, I should have found it difficult even to get food.

People have often said to me, "You have had plain sailing all your life; you have always been successful. I don't suppose you have ever had any real troubles."

CHAPTER XXV
"THE ANNUNCIATION"

I WORKED again at Islington Circus and afterwards at the Regent Theatre opposite King's Cross which Barry Jackson was then renting. I went to all the rehearsals of Rutland Boughton's "Bethlehem" from the time when he himself sang and played the score with all the principals sitting round on the stage. The empty theatre, curtain up, was vault-like, and it was cold! Johnston Douglas wore a Hom-burg hat and a muffler for the "Flight into Egypt," Gwen Ffrangon Davies was "Mary" in a coat with a fox-fur collar. All the "Angels" rehearsed their choruses in overcoats, as did the "Three Kings" when they knelt with their gifts. At rehearsal the "Infant" was represented by a cushion. On the last days I spent hours with Gwen while she studied how to handle it with the greatest possible reverence; her attention to detail was meticulous. At dress rehearsal I drew "The Annunciation" with a row of Press photographers in front, the tripod stands of their cameras almost hiding the standing "Angel Gabriel" with his sheath of artificial lilies and the kneeling "Mary."

The theatre echoed with sneezing and coughing; everyone in turn had influenza. Barry contracted it in the middle of producing. From his bed at St. Pancras Hotel he had to direct proceedings. When at last he was able to get about again, there was only a day or two left before the opening performance.

An hour before ringing up, Barry was still on the stage adding last touches of paint to the scenery, while Mrs. Brockhurst and I sewed rings on curtains.

I saw all the rehearsals and performances of "Romeo and Juliet," when Gwen was "Juliet" and John Gielgud

“Romeo,” his first big part; everyone considered he had great talent and a future. Scott Sunderland was “Mercurio” and Barbara Gott the “Nurse.”

I acquired tremendous speed in recording what was an extremely interesting “back-stage” experience.

A mixture of medieval costumes with lavatory basins, taps, fire buckets, brick walls of corridors and dressing-room life of to-day. The rage of the moment was making camisoles; between entrances, these were picked up and stitched while other girls sat making up at their dressing-tables, while perhaps another actress stood book in hand rehearsing her lines.

Here on the stage an old actor, playing a henchman’s part, is asleep on some steps, behind him a red door with “Push bar to open” printed on it in large white letters. Gwen, in her magnificent billowing robes and little coronet of leaves I made for her, sits in her dressing-room on the end of an old Victorian sofa, talking very fast to Scott Sunderland; he in doublet, trunks and hose, his cloak slung over a shoulder, his sword at his side, is standing, while Gwen’s prim, aproned dresser stitches up some seam that has given way; John Gielgud in his dressing-room is wearing the robe for his next entry, a small velvet hat on his head, a cigarette in his mouth, as he stands manicuring with an orange stick.

Some of these drawings were the best I did. I lived in the theatre, I knew it all inside out; I could have gone on for ever, if the run had not come to an end.

CHAPTER XXVI

I, AS DRESSER

IDJKOWSKI got a ballet of his own together, which was engaged to appear at the Coliseum. I designed the costumes—my one and only effort in that direction; I doubt if I have the type of imagination for such work. It is difficult for a painter of pictures, whose aim it is to make his work worthy of permanence, to be equally interested in an art, not dependent on itself alone. All the work may be lost after a few nights' showing. I have often seen some essential part of an artist's stage-picture spoiled at the whim of performer or management. Here, though, was a chance for me to become really a part of my subject. I became odd-job man to that troupe—from designer to mender and dresser.

What pictures I might have painted—rehearsals in an old Georgian room with cream walls, Idjkowski sitting in his black breeches and white silk shirt, pale hair reflected in a big baroque framed mirror; in front, Vera Sabina going through some intricate steps, also reflected in the glass, lit by a long window through which the backs of London houses could be seen; Evie, Idjkowski's wife, at the upright piano; a waiting group of dancers, their tarlatan sticking out fan-wise; the elegance of Massine, who had designed the ballet—his slim waist, the curve of his long neck. "Why can't you get a richer line in your neck?" he said to a girl. "You must practise to loosen and stretch it!" Living creatures used for a composition instead of paint or pencil.

A little crowded back room in Kensington, a relic of the mid-Victorian period—dark and musty—more than half filled with plush furniture and aspidistras. A dressmaker cuts and fits a silver tissue tunic on Idjkowski, who stands

showing his ordinary trousers underneath. Evie, in a critical attitude and fashionable hat and coat, sits forward on a chair. Cardboard boxes on tables and chairs lie open at all angles.

The final rehearsals on the stage: the girls standing wearily, Idjkowski bending over the footlights to argue with the conductor, while behind the carpenter fixes the set.

For the first time I took materials to the dressing-rooms and painted on the spot. I was in a happy vein and everything went well. Where Evie and another girl dressed there was plenty of room; a seat on the slab by the lavatory basins gave me an interesting view and plenty of water for my charcoal and wash. I had a pile of Heads's paper that worked like silk. One of those periods came when any difficulty of depicting movement may be attempted and accomplished without apparent effort. In the midst of exultation when you think you have achieved knowledge or power of expression, comes the realisation that you know nothing—you run dry.

CHAPTER XXVII

DIAGHILEFF

IN 1935 I write these particular words in my studio at No. 28, Finchley Road. On the outer wall is cut:

THOMAS HOOD

1799-1845

POET

died here.

I see through my big window the slate roofs of No. 1, No. 2 and also No. 3, where the Marquis used to make his embroidered dresses. The same balcony is there. A hanging basket of geraniums is in front of No. 2's green door and window. New houses have sprung up behind, the trees have grown and are in heavy summer leaf. I look down on the old corrugated iron roof of the garage shed that half covers the yard where Nijinska, the great Nijinski's sister, once danced, captivated by the mystery of a London fog.

That night she would not come indoors—a slender figure dressed in black, inventing new steps and mime. Chimney-pots and backs of houses in dark silhouette formed a back-cloth; on the balcony above, we were her audience.

During the years when I was so much with the Ballet, Tchernicheva came to the same corner in St. John's Wood. I painted her portrait in No 1. I told her what lovely eyes she had. She replied, "My husband says, '*les yeux d'un singe*.'" No monkey ever had eyes so expressive or eyelashes the length of hers. Her beauty was extraordinary.

Karsavina too came here. Once I remember she had an enormous parcel. She said it was *kapok* for a seat she was going to make. It seemed impossible that so great an artist

should be concerned with a domestic trifle. She too had great beauty, distinction and that sad look some Russians have that singles them out in any crowd.

Diaghileff insisted that his artistes should wear their hair simply dressed. He hated a head that looked big on the stage.

I have been in a dressing-room when he has come in and with all his fascination and tact said to a dancer, "You have such a lovely head, it is a pity to spoil it."

His attention to detail was unceasing; nothing escaped him, he was always on the watch for any imperfection. One night, word came to me that the top of my sketch-book leaves as turned over showed beyond a piece of scenery. During a performance, in a dressing-room, one of the men principals was telling of the terrific ovation he had received at the close of his dance, accounting for it by a slight change he had introduced—suddenly a head came through the door to deliver the message: "Mr. Diaghileff presents his compliments to Mr. So-and-so and requests that his dance be finished exactly as rehearsed."

Apart from the wealth of material gathered during these back-stage ballet days, it was inspiring to mingle with people to whom the arts were of the utmost importance. Whatever his faults, I doubt if such another as Diaghileff could ever come into being; a man who could bring together the best of music, decoration, choreography and executants, fusing them into a corporate work of art, imbuing all his workers with enthusiasm for the best and highest effort. Sometimes a dancer would leave for a time, only to return later; in no other company was the same atmosphere.

One season Diaghileff brought some Spanish gipsies over for whose dance Picasso had designed the *décor* and dresses. The "Quadro Flamenco" was a *succès fou*.

On the evening of the Spaniards' first appearance, while I was working in Lopokova's room, trays of glasses and bottles were brought in; then came a vivid group of men and women with Diaghileff and Grigoriev. The women all

had a single carnation on an enormously long stalk stuck in their black hair. Big goblets were filled with red wine and tossed down one after another, while the chatter and noise grew terrific and big eyes shone.

Lopokova turned to me and said, "Monsieur Diaghileff gives them the rich Spanish wine to make them dance strong!"

Among the troupe was a young man whose legs had been cut off close to his body in a train accident during their travels. Before that he had been one of their best dancers—now he had his stumps shod and danced on them. Diaghileff had been nervous of bringing him before the English public and wanted to leave him in Spain, but the troupe refused to come without him; he was their "mascot." Contrary to expectation, the cripple's dance was a great success, but after a few nights the Spanish Embassy interfered—"It was beneath the dignity of Spain." It was pathetic to see him watching the show from the wings every night. We used to talk to each other by signs. Cecchetti stood by my side exclaiming at intervals, "It is not real dancing!" But he never missed a performance.

When the furore caused by these Spaniards was at its height, the brilliant woman dancer who wore the long white frilled dress eloped with a guitarist. The other girl principal was so beautiful that she had always to be put in a taxi at the stage-door. Her appearance had such disastrous effect on passers by.

Some of my best work up till then was done from those dancers, whose every performance I watched. To my loss, I have never been in Spain, but if there is any definite influence in my work it can most certainly be traced to that country. The passionate sense of life that comes through in all their arts as I know them—music, painting, dancing—has for me a strange appeal.

Diaghileff was envious of the long queues that were lined up for "Chu Chin Chow." Why could he not put on a show that would draw such crowds?

With this in mind, one year in Paris he worked on "The Sleeping Princess," on the lines of more old-fashioned Russian Ballet; it was to be a magnificent production, but things did not go well from the start—drastic changes had to be made half-way, and Nijinska was called in to pull it together.

It was Bakst's last *décor*; in it he displayed all the extravagance of his imagination. Nothing but the finest embroideries, satins and tissues were used; one dress alone cost five hundred pounds.

All the Ballet fans were at the first night, but "The Princess" was coldly received. "Tchaikowski's music was sentimental! Bakst out of date and too ornate after Derain and Picasso!" Old supporters considered themselves too highbrow, and it was above the heads of the general public.

The half-empty house, the lukewarm audience were depressing after the furore the Diaghileff Ballets usually created. Not even Lopokova's reappearance filled the house. I learnt the arts of the professional "claque"; one of the management fetched me from behind every show to help warm up the audience when he sat on one side of the stalls and I the other.

Behind the scenes was plenty of light for me to work by, and from my point of view, the effect magnificent, besides the same things happened night after night—I have never had a better chance of studying. Had I the same chance now, I would take a canvas and work direct; however I did a great number of drawings and used them for many pictures including one of Spessisiva in the wings with her dresser, bought by Mr. Alexander Hill of Glasgow.

There was a packed house on the night when Cecchetti made his last appearance on the London stage as the witch. His performance was unforgettable, as if he knew he was appearing for the last time.

I saw a telegram delivered to Diaghileff as he stood in the wings. He burst into tears. Bakst was dead.

After a few months a slackness I had never known before

affected the stage. The indifference of the public contaminated the artistes, who grumbled at everything. Many of the dresses were too heavy for dancing. Idjkowski threw his blue bird dress into the corner of his dressing-room and refused to wear it again; another had to be made and the old one discarded although it had cost a hundred pounds.

I was the only contented worker in the theatre.

Towards the end of one week it was rumoured that Diaghileff had gone away. "Will he come back in time for pay-night?" everyone asked. He remained away. The show closed down.

The *corps de ballet* had no money with which to pay their lodgings or buy food; all the principals clubbed together to help them. One of the ballerinas, living at one of the biggest hotels was stranded there, without any knowledge of the English tongue. Her chaperon, her old peasant mother, I was told, always had a great fear of the handsome apartments, and lived mostly in a wardrobe.

CHAPTER XXVIII

PAVLOVA

ONE year, while working with Pavlova's Ballet, she asked me if, when it was all over, I would go up to her house in Hampstead and do some drawings of her for a certain book.

I went every day for five or six weeks, and when the drawings were completed she begged me to continue my work at her home, if I wished. I was only too willing.

Every morning saw her dressed in tights and Grecian dress of pale pink heavy *crêpe de chine*, cut on the cross out of a square, elastic holding it under the breasts and below the waist; thus the drapery fell in traditional Grecian folds, with zigzag edge, such as is often seen in ancient sculpture. Hard work had to be done at the bar in the square hall. There were, too, her pupils to teach. In a rest came a visit to the kitchen; through the open door I heard excited Russian voices discussing the menu for luncheon. She sat at one end of the table, her husband, Monsieur D'André, at the other. From her many guests I first heard of the horrors of the change in Russia.

Practice over, Pavlova slipped a loose purple garment over her dance-clothes and we visited the dressmaker in a little room crowded with crisp rings of tarlatan on which she was constantly at work, tier upon tier of frills, dozens of yards of material.

Workmen were everywhere in the house, both inside and out, painting and repairing the neglect due to the war. Most of the precious possessions were in store, the drawing-room was almost empty, but for a couch over which a brilliant Spanish shawl had been thrown, a splendid setting for Pavlova's black and ivory colouring.

She took me to see the lake in the garden where she had

kept her swans to study for her dance; it was dry, and when I saw it London had soiled the concrete sides with its smoke.

Pavlova's English was comic at times. One of her pupils used her arms and hands in a stupid, lifeless way; one day Pavlova took her hand and squeezed the fingers, saying "Too mooch grease, too mooch grease!" Meaning they were fat and nerveless.

Once when driving me home in her car, Pavlova took off her shoe, and gave me her foot to feel how finger and thumb could meet behind the tendon above the heel; there was only the thickness of skin, but the strength in that foot was phenomenal. She posed for me on the point of one foot, leg extended, without resting for five whole minutes. She was proud of the feat, and I too was proud of having done a balanced drawing in so short a time.

Pavlova possessed the perfect body for her art. Cecchetti often said to me, "No one has ever had the line of Pavlova, and no one ever will!" Her exceptionally long, full throat, her little body, her tapering limbs were perfect, yet although she gave the impression of ineffable beauty, her features were not specially good.

Her heavily lidded eyes had a look not belonging to this earth; if that strange look had been her only gift it would have been enough. They were dark-ringed one day when I went. She was terribly tired, and said, "I do not want to dance to-night, but I must." She was booked somewhere in the suburbs. She went of course. The public must have its idol. How few realise the cost to the artiste, or what endurance and vital effort have gone to reach that pitch of perfection. Who among the audience could imagine their matchless *ballerina* hanging on to a curtain in the wings, panting, almost too tired to stand, with a stream of sweat pouring down her back? What pleasures others enjoy must she have denied herself to reach these heights! When at the end illness came she had no stamina to withstand it; she was like a taper that is done—the flame just went out.

I never again actually spoke to Pavlova after those visits to her house. She sent me an invitation on her next return to London, and I went to her at the time appointed, but evidently she had not told the manservant who opened the door that I was expected; he refused to allow me to go in, saying in broken English: "Madame see no one." A burly, surly Russian, who stood in truculent attitude, arms stretched from door-jamb to door-jamb, as if afraid I was going to force my way past him. I tried to explain that I had been asked to come; he pretended not to understand, nor would he make enquiries—just the usual Dragon set to guard the great ones from intrusion, but my pride would not stand the strain—too haughty to argue indefinitely, I came away and never went again.

CHAPTER XXIX

ETCHING

I PICKED up a manual about etching on a bookstall in the Charing Cross Road, a misleading one, for in it the process seemed both simple and easy. A friend gave me an ancient press that had been stored in a damp cellar for years, an amateur affair not made for real use, which you could lift with one hand.

John Everett, the big Englishman whom we met in Holland, and I started in his studio in Finchley Place. He knew more than I, although he too had picked up his knowledge by hearsay and from books.

No one who has not indulged in etching can appreciate the excitement of seeing the acid bubbling along the exposed lines, and even that is nothing compared with making the first print. It was a miracle to get any impression from that little warped press, on which Everett had to sit and turn the handle at the same time.

We next turned to aquatinting. Leverton Harris had lent me a book of Goya's *Caprichos*; I learned a great deal from them. Neither Everett nor I had money to spend on a proper dusting box or outfit; nearly all our tools were makeshift from odds and ends that Everett picked up from different market-stalls and warehouses in strange parts of London, of which, before, I knew not the existence.

My first successful plates were "A Crowd" and "A Dancer Resting." After that I did "At the Folies Bergères," "Dressing Room No. 1," "Spanish Dancers," "Bank Holiday," "Hampstead Heath," "A Fair," etc.

Gerald Brockhurst, whom I was seeing often, said, "Don't aquatint, go in for pure line etching," but the broader method appealed to me.

I bought Sir George Clausen's old press. For months Harold and I endeavoured together to master the art of printing. The acid, the black varnish and printers' ink! I have never been so ingrained with black. A glorious period, I executed many plates that have since been successful.

Everett constantly rushed round to my studio to tell the technical tips he had picked up from mysterious sources; and later, after his visit to Paris, expressly to study aquatinting from a man in the trade, he gave me all the information he had gathered. He developed further on his own account and I on mine. At last I would try if it were possible to model in that medium a life-sized head of the beautiful dark girl then posing for me.

Everett had a piece of old steel sheeting in his studio which he had given me to experiment on. It was pitted with rust so I spent nearly a week polishing it; the edges were not even straight and it was about a quarter of an inch thick. I worked direct from the model, heart-breaking days; the oftener the plate went into the acid and the further progress of the work the worse the look of it, until all was obliterated.

I cleaned the plate and a patch of shining metal showed through the black—there was an eye on it! Both the model and I, in a state of livid excitement, rushed round to Everett to ask him to print it. The heavy rollers jumped down with a thud off the thick metal plate as the steel went through his new big press, nearly breaking the cogs. His blankets were cut and the paper of the print, but nothing mattered, he was as thrilled as I. An impression was there that I was convinced would be a masterpiece when properly printed.

I had the edges of my boiler plate cut and bevelled; David Strang printed it, the blacks as rich as any mezzotint. The plate was published under the title of "*Filia Mundi*," because we all thought it deserved a high-sounding title.

I still have the original print that went through Everett's press as a souvenir of one of my happiest pieces of work. For a time I was engrossed in etching and doing the necessary studies for the subjects.

I found "Bank Holiday" on Hampstead Heath. I never missed going there, rich in material though terribly exhausting, trying to draw while jostled by a crowd—often I felt almost too tired to get back home. I painted a picture and many water-colours, and etched from the studies.

I found it much easier to work there when I got to know the show people. Sometimes they let me sit in their wagons or behind their stalls in comparative quiet. I drew many of them, including one woman at a rifle range; the next time I met her was at Islington Agricultural Hall, and on recognising me she said, "Oh, you're the lady who drew me, some draw it was too!"

I always liked show people and got on well with them. They are clean-living, with a great sense of self-respect. Years before, when I used to spend a great deal of time working at Penzance Fair, I made friends. Several times I have been pressed to join them as a lightning cartoonist; they all said I could make a lot of money that way. Once I was tempted to go with some show people; all was arranged, even the wagon I was to sleep in. If it had not been for Harold's disapproval I should have gone for the sake of adventure.

Some of the fair wagons are astonishingly handsome, spotless and orderly inside. Fair life has always had for me a great fascination, the bands all playing different tunes at one time, the gilt and the colour, the worn grass, the sun and even the rain and wind. I love mingling with a big crowd, I love the sound that a pile of pennies can make; when a showman is an adept in rattling them, the sound is extraordinarily rhythmic.

Perhaps it was my interest in fairs that led me to the circus. I always had it at the back of my mind to do more

serious work in this direction when I had the opportunity. What I had seen whetted my appetite.

From the studies made at Islington Circus I had executed the biggest and most important aquatint. The first print had been entirely satisfactory, and it was never retouched. An edition of twenty was printed with no proofs and no states. I called it "Five Clowns." Comical Walker was the clown in striped pantaloons, Johnny Regan and Randy were also in it.

The edition sold out quickly at Brown and Phillips when I had an exhibition there. I became tired of printing, signing and packing up parcels to meet the orders for all the various prints. Perhaps that success might have continued, but it is impossible for me to stay on a beaten path, other adventures have to be made, fresh study and again fresh study. Certain people have often asked, "Are you never going to settle down and paint what you can paint and stop making fresh studies?" It is impossible to stop! Inside is a burning passion to solve new mysteries—a horse—a landscape, sky or sea—a lion—a figure in movement or in stillness—a street, a crowd or a portrait of man, woman or child—a dog, a cat. It is ridiculous, one person cannot paint everything and work in all mediums.

CHAPTER XXX

THE TYROL

EARLY in 1923 P. G. Konody asked where we were going for the summer. He said "I am taking my two daughters to the Tyrol—to Madonna di Campillio. Do join the party."

Harold and I followed them to Italy during an August heat wave. The heat was appalling. Our relief was great when we left Trento in a car to climb the mountain to Madonna. Every mile round the hairpin bends led us into cooler air. The grandeur grew and grew. The white patches on the summits were actually snow! It was our first sight of big mountains.

When we arrived at Madonna di Campillio, a house-painter was decorating the outside of the café over which we were to sleep. He came to our room and presented us with two oranges and two sprigs of edelweiss, an offering to his *compères*. He had noticed paint-boxes and easels among our luggage. From that moment we became friends. He was a Sicilian, always laughing.

We went walks with him on his holidays. In the evenings he took us to little back-street cafés, where music was provided by a big mechanical instrument, and a coin produced a tune. Sometimes two boys played guitar and concertina. I did many drawings of the dancing and the musicians and the boys who came with alpenstocks and hats bunched with edelweiss. Some of them danced well together; there were never enough girls to go round.

Our adventures made Konody envious; his hotel had just an ordinary dance-band and ball-room.

We had grand walks every day, starting out at half-past eight and returning at six. Konody, pale and frail in London, was tanned there, and proud that he could walk farther

than anyone, at home in the hills, he loved showing off his powers of endurance, a good companion on those tramps.

When we left in early September most of the cattle had been brought down from the heights and the hotels and houses were being vacated. Heavy snow was expected. Going down to Trento in the 'bus two eagles flew over so close that they nearly flew into the car; the driver was so excited that he stopped while we watched them sailing over the deep valley.

Back in London, I worked on a canvas of the dancing with our gay "Siciliano" playing the guitar. My mountain pictures were not at all successful and I destroyed them.

On our way home we went to Florence and stayed in a flat that Pino Orioli had taken for us. Pino had left London and taken a little antique bookshop of his own close to the old bridge; through him we met Norman Douglas, and made friends of two collectors and book lovers, Dr. and Mrs. Leroy Crummer from Omaha, who were instrumental in causing both Harold and me to go to America a year or two later.

Harold and I revelled in all we saw in the museums and the streets. We planned to return the next year, but how difficult it is to do all one wishes and work as well!

The end of our visit was marred by news that our flat had been burgled. We travelled home not knowing how much the thieves had left behind, and we had stayed so long that all our money was gone.

CHAPTER XXXI
PRACHOVSKI SKÁLY

IN 1924 we went to Czechoslovakia. We crossed to Amsterdam by cargo-boat. It was much more sophisticated and expensive than when we used to go that way years before; the well-deck we looked into this time was full of mutton carcasses. We aired our Peasant-Dutch to the porters in the old City, which seemed unchanged, but there were fewer peasants in costume, and we saw no orphans in their black and red dresses. However, it was almost like going back home, and glorious visiting the museums to see again the pictures we had studied so intensely years before.

From there we went to Berlin. I was tremendously interested in the Breughels, and hated having to leave so soon on that account.

Then we went to Dresden and found Lucas Cranach, another master unknown to us, who impressed us profoundly. He had all that Holbein had, but greater imagination and something else as well. Was it a more wonderful sense of colour—a more sensitive hand?

Such occasions when I have been swept off my feet in this way have generally resulted in much indifferent work. This was no exception. Speaking for myself, it is not advisable to be consciously influenced by anyone else's work. The work that comes straight from my own self is the best I can do. To a painter, his own vision perforce seems commonplace, but, rendered with honesty, to others may be individual. If he is really commonplace, let him be frank. It is better to be a real louse than an imitation lion.

We went on to Prague. I cannot describe its magnificence,

its great broad river boiling its way through the city, but we were disappointed to find no pictures in the Museum.

We motored to castles like places in fairy-tales, romantic—yes, but I cannot envy the Princesses who had been shut up in those prison-like walls, the chill inside—ugh! We sat gazing up at broad, overhanging eaves all patterned underneath. Some big houses were decorated all over outside; I remember stucco walls where the stones were symbolised by a pretty swirl in black with handsome effect. All the men had flat backs to their heads; the women were either very plain or very handsome. On the pavements we saw peasants in gorgeous costume, with baskets full of flowered shawls and embroideries exposed for sale.

From Prague we went to Prachovski Skály. We lived in a club where people went to walk in the mountains close by. One day some children followed us at a distance for many miles. At last they summoned up courage to come close when they burst out laughing and ran off. They were overheard to say, "Well, they weren't worth coming so far to look at!" They, having never seen a foreigner before, apparently expected something quite different from themselves.

I drew to my heart's content, as indeed I had done ever since leaving England, even in the train.

We went to all out-of-the-way towns and villages. There were signs of prosperity and great industry and manufacturing springing up. We visited a big Sokol Institute in a little town. It had a theatre and a vast gymnasium. Harold surprised us all by going up a pole hand over hand. We looked down into an immense yard, where lit by electricity, a large crowd of men were exercising after their day in the workshops. One man was over eighty, a cobbler who had come every night for many years. His body was splendid; he had as much energy as the young men, only his knees would not bend so well.

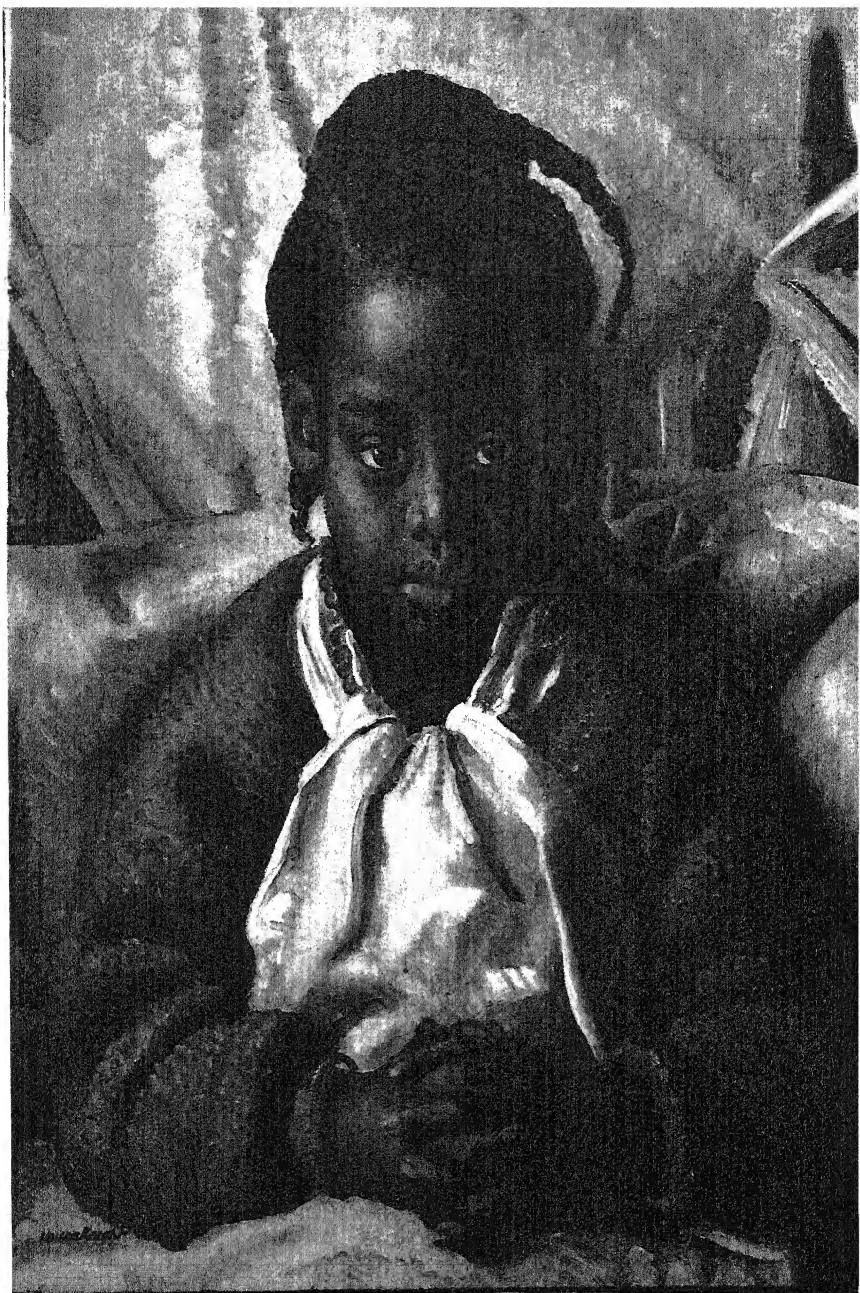
We had a unique experience when we went to a village where the friend who was taking us was born. None of the

people had seen a foreigner before; no cars went through. The women wore handkerchiefs over their heads and went barefoot. It was a pretty sight to see them gathering flax in the fields.

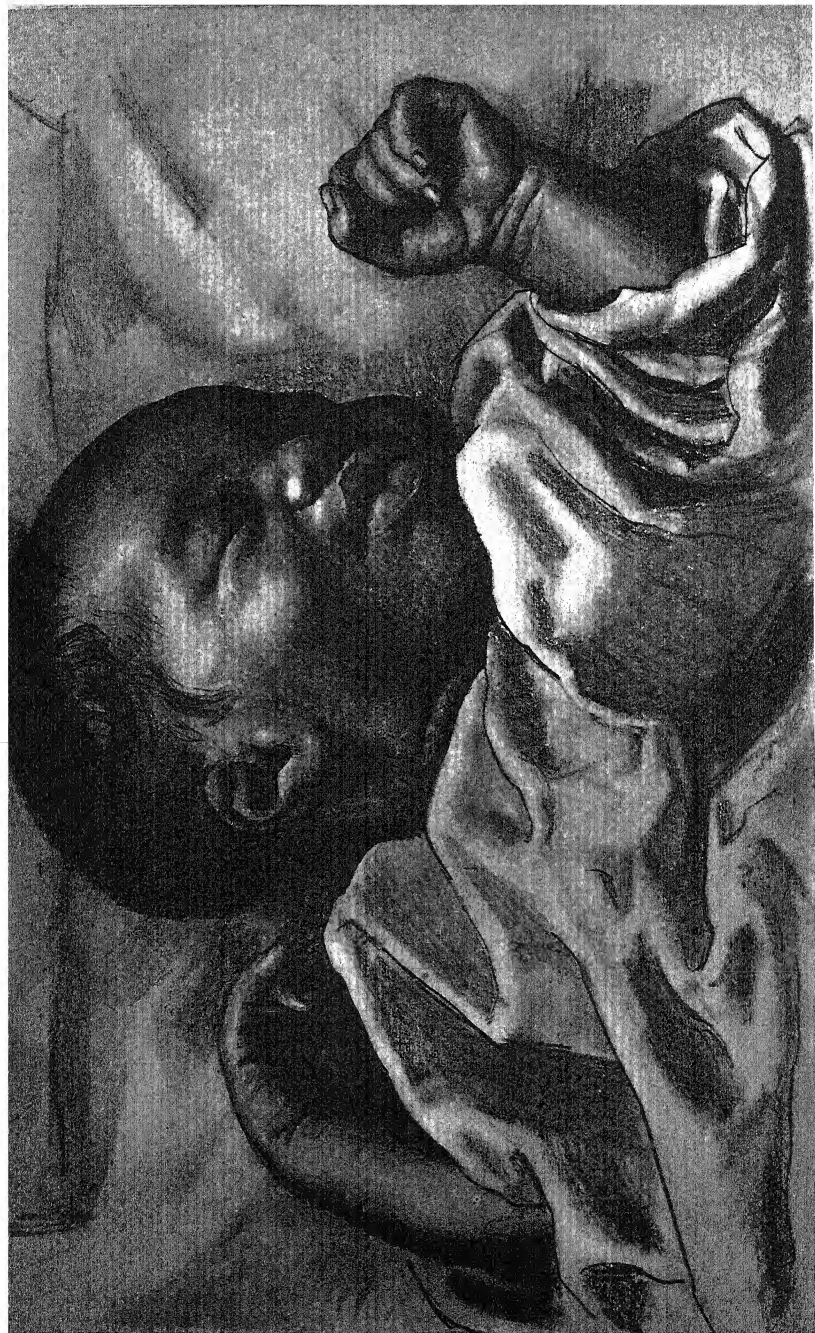
The eaves to the farm roofs projected many feet, sheltering the walls from the snows. By each outer door a stack of wood was piled up to the roof ready for winter. The people looked at one with wondering eyes; they were primitive, stood stolidly on legs like tree-trunks prepared to endure the long winter when, for months, they would be snowbound. Yet in them we sensed an inherent artistry, their costumes were miracles of colour; aesthetic pleasure had been taken in the building of even the poorest farms. While we were there a barn was erected: although of no particular account, it had to be decorative; fascinated, I watched a workman use saw, hatchet and spoke-shave to carve the elaborate joist ends, with extraordinary speed and precision.

We camped in a mill belonging to relations of our friend; we slept on a wooden bed on sacks filled with straw, and used big towels, my cloak and Harold's Burberry for bed-clothes. We bathed in the mill-stream. It was cold!

At the home farm we had many meals. The mother was over eighty, and a wealthy woman, but she was up at four o'clock every morning, working in the fields with the others. The midden which her house and barns surrounded had a most powerful odour, as I found to my cost when I sat close to it one day making a study of an old labourer, who had never crossed the threshold of a house, but lived and slept in the barn's straw, piled up behind and all round him as he posed for me groaning and grunting, his feet bare, his Russian high boots alongside; he had taken them off ready for his corns to be cut by two medical students who were spending their holidays at the farm. The old gentleman—more animal than human—was not very willing to be painted; he wanted to have his feet attended to; however, his mistress forced him to sit for me, coming out constantly



JUANITA
1927



THE DARKY BABY
1927

to keep him in order. I gave the drawing to Dr. William S. Baer, the orthopaedic surgeon in Baltimore.

We went to the inn sometimes and had drinks with the peasants, and I drew them all drinking their mugs of lager.

One evening we walked over the foot-hills to visit some spiritualists. Before we were half-way rain started; our light clothes were wet when, just as darkness fell, we arrived at the lonely farm—all quiet, no light showing. A woman bundled up in clothes answered our knocking. She lit a candle and we saw that everyone had retired for the night in the great kitchen, living- and bedroom combined; the walls pale blue washed, a joist or a beam showing here and there. In a bed an ancient woman sat bolt upright swaying backwards and forwards, her black eyes staring out of an incredibly wizened dark face. She was over a hundred. A big lump filled another bed, now and again it heaved round and grunted indignantly, whether man or woman I never knew—the head was completely covered.

The single candle lit a stage properly set for our séance; we should have seen all sorts of ghosts. It was dramatic enough in that strange big room, the details invisible, as this lump of a woman in a half-trance mumbled words we could not understand and pointed to someone behind whom we could not see.

The rain was pouring down when we started home. We took a short-cut and lost our way, wandering for hours in a pine-forest with a single electric torch that would go out when most wanted. Harold was anxious, waiting at home so long; he had considered it a folly to go.

We were the only foreigners at a village fair. The young girls wore embroidered dresses, shawls and enormous muslin and lace sleeves and caps, the boys had handsome velvet breeches, ornamented shirts and little round hats.

The fair was not what you would call up to date, with the exception of one booth which we had to pay our pennies for—everyone who came out was laughing. I do not

remember what it was called, but the word "American" figured largely on the front. It was just a big hoax! Inside there was nothing but a lot of broken pots, rubbish and a dirty old stuffed goose.

I brought back an enormous number of drawings and studies. Some I sold in America and some I have to remind us of unusual and happy days.

CHAPTER XXXII
DARKIES IN BALTIMORE

THROUGH Dr. and Mrs. Crummer, we met Dr. and Mrs. William S. Baer of Baltimore. It was arranged that Harold should go to Baltimore to paint Dr. Finney, of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. He went later in the company of the Crummers, leaving me in London.

I had a composition in mind which I set about: a 5-feet by 4-feet canvas, "Dressing for the Ballet." I did a preliminary cartoon and tried to get the line balanced just as I wanted it, as much time spent as on the picture itself.

Golly came from Cornwall to stay with me. She was so excited about the ballet that she nearly fainted one night and we had to come out.

Part of the time Dod Procter stayed with me. One Sunday Dod and I lunched with Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Sutro; coming out into the foggy street was hateful: we did not want to go back and sit at home alone after so much enjoyment. I tried to think of somebody else exciting to take Dod to see, and as we were walking down Langford Place I suggested that we should go and call on Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Symons, who were then our neighbours. Arthur Symons had an Egyptian bust I wanted Dod to see particularly. Unfortunately, Mrs. Symons was out, but through the curtains of the front room we were able to take a peep at the bust on the mantelshelf before we went out of the garden.

Harold wrote at the end of three months to say that he had so many commissions in the U.S.A. would I come and join him? Recklessly paying up everything before I left made me rather short of funds; I had little money then to buy a trunk. Dod and I went out shopping and from the top

of a 'bus going down Marylebone High Street, Dod caught sight of an impressive trunk labelled eighteen and sixpence, so we got off and bought it. We went to a shop and tried on all the clothes they had in stock. Dod said it was a queer sight outside the partitioned trying-on place—clouds of cigarette smoke issuing from the top while garment after garment came flying over. I do not remember such recklessness, but I only know how awful I looked in most of the clothes. I was in a tremendous hurry for I wanted to work on my picture till the last possible moment.

One day, while Harold was away, Ethel and Rae Robertson came very depressed; they had perfected their double-piano work, had a large repertoire, but were making little headway in England. We sat round the fire in our sitting-room talking it over for hours. It was there and then decided they should at all costs make a plunge, go abroad to play, give concerts in America, get the money somehow to do it. Great things came from that afternoon's discussion. Their reputation is world-wide now.

During our stay at Mousehole, Cornwall, the preceding summer, we had been over to the Procters' Newlyn studios and seen Dod's "Morning," which impressed us enormously. Harold said when he saw the start, "That's a noble-looking picture."

Imagine a back alleyway right in Newlyn Harbour—a rough entrance to a metal-works—a flight of wooden stairs—two doors at the top—one leading to Ernest's, one to Dod's studio.

At the far end of Dod's workshop a big window overlooked the harbour, the far pier almost hidden by rows of fishing-craft, trawlers and light-blue French crabbers of gracious swift line. Closer in, a black derelict hulk loomed, used as a coal-store.

The walls of the studio were whitewashed over the stone, on which a cartoon of "Morning" was pinned among other studies.

Close to the window was a bed; on its drabness her model

had posed. To one side a Victorian couch stood, its colouring "manure," as Dod herself described it, and the blue cushion on which the boy baby had lain. Her painting of him had been one of her first successes.

Her easel was not of noble proportions—she had never possessed a proper paint-box. Of comfort there was none. You could not imagine a more primitively equipped studio. In it Dod herself looked too slight.

A short while before leaving London, an invitation came from their Royal Highnesses The Duke and Duchess of York to an evening party at St. James's Palace. Such an important event called for a new evening frock. I went from one shop to another and looked a rag-bag in everything I tried on; at last I found something suitable. After a long day's work on my picture I cleaned off the paint and got ready. I gave the address, St. James's Palace, to the taxi-driver, who was evidently so impressed that when, half-way, I found only threepence in my bag he refused to turn back, saying he would call next day for his money.

We were received by their Royal Highnesses, and the Prince of Wales came in afterwards. It was quite a small party; although some faces looked familiar I knew not a soul to speak to. I was a complete stranger, wandering from room to room enjoying the spectacle and the pictures. There was a portrait of Queen Elizabeth that gave the real auburn-haired woman with no flattery; I realised for the first time just how she must have looked. In the room where the supper was laid at long tables, Holbein's Henry VIII stood straddle-legged, dominating the brilliant crowd, an expression on his face which said, "I am here to stay."

I walked to Hyde Park Corner, where I took a No. 2 'bus and paid my three pennies for the fare back to the Eyre Arms corner.

I had long hours' work on my picture "Dressing for the Ballet" the very day before sailing on the *Hamburg*. I made

many friends on board through my drawings, and we had a jolly German Christmas on board.

It was exciting one night when the barometer went down as low as it could. A party of us was having supper in the restaurant on the top deck; suddenly the vessel started to roll in a terrible way and all the crocks flew off the buffet and tables; we slid first down one side and then down the other, laughing and clinging to our champagne glasses; other less careful people lost both glasses and bottles, which rolled about emptying their contents. A great crash sounded below and the ship quivered under a violent blow; much damage was done; portholes had been smashed in and people hurt.

I made friends with an auctioneer and his wife from Board-Walk, Atlantic City. They were good fun and we had a gay coterie on board. I did a drawing of the auctioneer, and he in return promised to send me a Chinese drum. This man had an immense voice, of which he was very proud. He said, "I could make myself heard from one end of the vessel to the other." He asked me if my husband had a pet-name, and directly I recognised Harold waiting at our dock he bawled out "Knighty" and was terribly disgusted when Harold did not take any notice. Harold was furious at this stranger's familiarity.

We had watched the snow-covered banks and skyscrapers; the whiteness turned the river to dark-brown grey, even the churning foam from the tugs looked dirty by contrast and the sky leaden. The luggage was put out on the lower deck; my eighteen-and-sixpenny box shone out a frail green among the staunch cabin trunks. The auctioneer remarked, as we leant over a rail watching them come up from the hold, "You can always tell the experienced traveller by his cases; just look at that one!" pointing out my own; "anyone could tell that the person who owns that has never crossed the Atlantic before!" It was awful having to claim it. Perhaps that is why I never received the Chinese drum.

The snow was piled up high by the side-walks in New York where Harold had arranged to stay at the Waldorf Astoria, and straight away went out to buy, in celebration, a new fur coat for me—it was bitterly cold, and my old musquash, “rat” Homer had called it when I went to America before, sadly needed renovation.

At Baltimore we stayed with Dr. and Mrs. Baer. Again I experienced the warmth of American hospitality. No matter how occupied an American man of affairs may be he can always find time to help a stranger. Billy Baer was one of these.

I wanted to paint the negroes; he took me to his Children’s Hospital; I set up my easel in a ward full of little girls being cured of all sorts of spinal complaints and other dreadful afflictions. The one thing they looked forward to was Dr. Baer’s visit. One full-blooded little darkie who had been lying on her back for months possessed a big, rich voice—hardly a child’s voice at all; she was always singing Spirituals, the favourite being “All God’s chillun got wings.” I rifled a ten-cent store each day for trinkets—the little darkies delighted in decorating themselves all over, almost too many beads and bracelets for my purpose. I painted the little girl with the voice and another child sitting up in bed near by, ready to go out cured of a club-foot.

Not far from the Children’s Hospital, Dr. and Mrs. Baer had their kennels of forty chows. I do not know which Dr. Baer loved most—the children or animals. They said he would keep his most illustrious patients waiting to give first aid to any dog that was injured in the street outside his clinic.

Mrs. Baer asked me to do a dry point of one of her prize dogs—a black chow. In the kennels one dark afternoon I made a study; never was more unwilling sitter, and there was little light, no detail visible. No sooner had I made a line or two on the paper than the kennel-man came behind me and found fault with the “points,” saying, “The eyes should be absolute triangles,” “the muzzle should be dead

square," and so on. The drawing was not a success. An evening or two later the kennel-man, very smartly dressed, came to see me and bring a drawing that his niece (aged fourteen) had done from a photograph, to show me as an example of what a picture of a chow should be.

Dr. Baer took me to the famous Johns Hopkins Hospital, where I was allowed to wander at will through the darkie wards with a view to making studies. I settled to work in the women's maternity ward; whether they imagined I had some sinister purpose in drawing them I do not know, but after making several attempts, I gave up going there, they were so suspicious, a great disappointment; some of them were lovely; I remember particularly a slender creature with a dainty neck and a thick bush of crinkly hair with little plaits in it, a baby at her young breasts, the pink palms of their hands, the glazed black of the baby's eyes, the depths in hers, the mauvish darkness of their skin shown up so powerfully by the white sheets and the diffused light of sun trying to shine through the drawn blinds at the window.

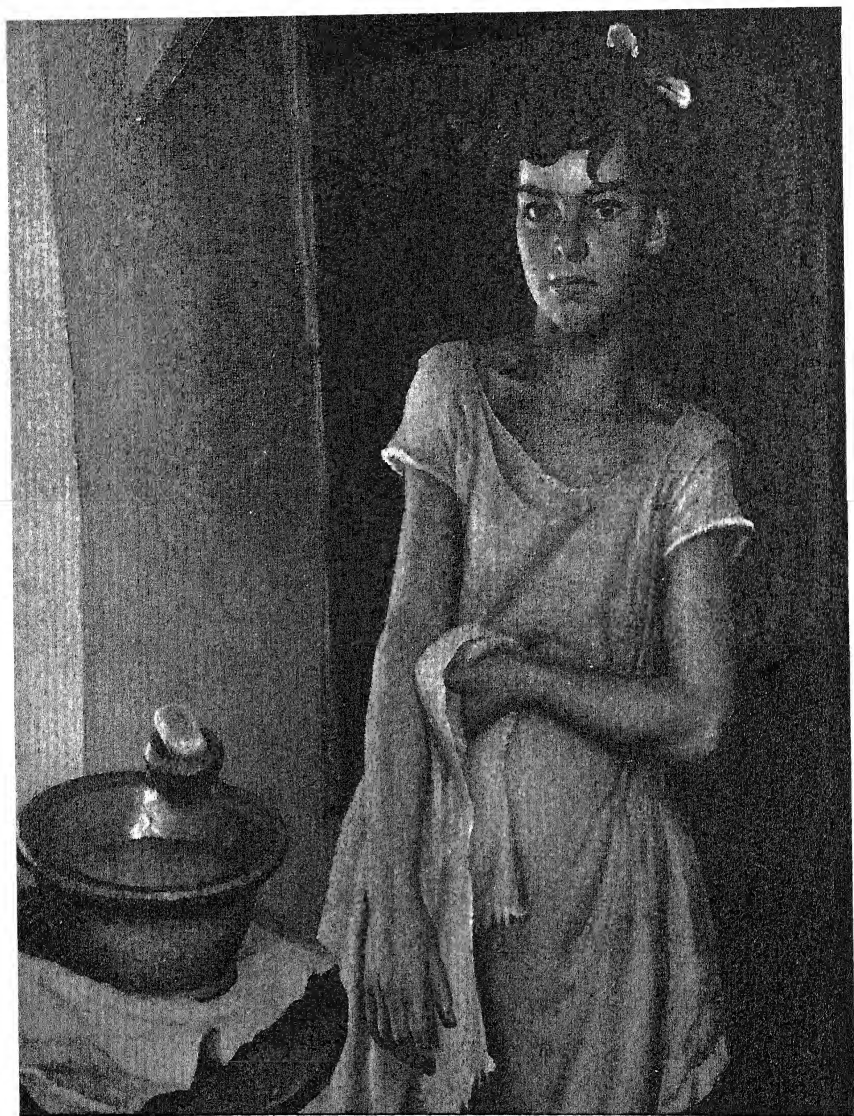
It was hot in the babies' ward. I was drenched with sweat, but I did a number of drawings there. They were extraordinarily attractive little creatures, much more advanced for their age than white babies.

I started work in the men's ward by asking an old man to pose, who had recovered from his operation and was sitting in a chair. He said, "I can't afford it; I have no money to pay you!" I explained it would cost him nothing. While I was at work, he told me that he was a market gardener; that he was leaving the hospital next day, had only enough for his train fare back to his own country, and was terribly worried; he was sure he could not walk the ten miles to his home at the other end. When I gave him a handful of "chicken-feed" to pay for a lift he could scarcely believe his good fortune, he wept and overwhelmed me with gratitude.

One young man propped with pillows was a fine type. He did not appear to be very ill, and was most anxious to be



THE BEDROOM
1927



SUSIE AND THE WASH-BASIN
1929

drawn. The nurses said it would be a kindness to interest him. To get a good view, I sat between his and the next bed, where a man had just come in with pneumonia.

While I was there, doctors, medical students and nurses formed a group round us; they would not allow me to be disturbed. As my model was blocked from view, I turned and witnessed a poignant scene, a subject for a portrait group such as Rembrandt might have delighted in: the negro, stripped to the waist, lay back, his eyes closed, his big arms inert, hands palm upwards stretched out on the sheets, the muscles of his perfectly proportioned torso cleanly modelled in the strong light, his gigantic chest heaving laboriously, a picture of mighty strength and primitive beauty in complete abandon to fate. Round and bending over him were white-coated figures, their flesh pale rose in contrast. I have always wished since, that some hospital might commission such a group and give me the chance to do what I then saw.

Two days later I started off to my hospital by relay of 'bus and tram. I hated those rides, for each car had a different system of payment and the conductors were rough to a stranger who did not know the intricacies of their machines by instinct; some pointed a pistol-like contraption at you and you shoved a dime down a slit in the point. More than once on those trips I was claimed by Swedes as a fellow countrywoman.

Heavy snow had fallen in the night. I stood on an island ready to board my last tram, engrossed in the beauty of the streets and the interest of a snow-plough clearing the roadway in front. I did not notice that everyone else had left the island, when suddenly I felt a stream of icy slush pouring down my back between fur collar and neck, running down my legs and filling my snow-shoes—the plough had worked its way round behind. The pile of papers and magazines that I was taking to the men, sketch-book, bag, all were soaked and filthy; thoroughly depressed, I went on to the hospital. I dried whatever I could in the hot cupboard

where the babies' napkins were kept and made my way to the men's ward. Two fresh cases were where my model and the Rembrandt subject had been. I asked about them and was told that they were both dead. I came away quickly and could never go again.

In default of a studio, I took a front room in an apartment-house for a studio and had a darkie model posing with her baby. I called the picture "The Madonna of the Cotton-fields." There too I painted Ireen and Pearl with Baltimore sky-scrapers as background, another canvas that went down in the *Manuka* disaster.

Ireen and Pearl Johnson—both darkies—were the secretary and head nurse at Dr. Baer's clinic. He had nothing but praise for them, two intelligent and charming girls. It was they who found the girl who posed for my Madonna. Before I left it would have been easy to have anyone I wanted to sit. When the darkies realised I was not caricaturing them many were anxious to be painted.

Ireen and Pearl took me to a Saturday afternoon "social" at the office of a negro newspaper. I, the only white there, was disappointed; no spirituals, only ordinary ballads were sung. A girl recited in schoolgirlish way, but her violent pink dress had an exciting effect on her skin, making it almost green. The biggest sensation was when a darkie minister with amazing eloquence delivered a speech, exhorting his audience to remember that they were a great race—"jungle people." . . . He told of negroes who count in art, science and affairs, and as he talked, one old darkie stared as if entranced, his great eyes rolling and showing the whites. The office room grew dim, dusk fell, the speech became more and more moving, the old man's lids grew heavier and heavier, his white head nodded, soon his chin was tucked into his chest, and he fell fast asleep, snoring loudly.

I went to their Arts Club and criticised pictures, all done by darkies in business; some showed talent. I had hoped to see something of real negro art, but was disappointed;

all was influenced by our point of view. I was constantly on the look-out to find in the second-hand shops some wooden gods that they might have brought from Africa. I never did, and no one had heard of them.

Ireen and Pearl took me to a concert, where again I was the only white present.

It was to be a big programme. The third item was put down as Miss So-and-so, studied in Berlin, gold medals, etc., "Chopin's Preludes." I thought she played extremely well, and there was good attention for the first, four or five, but before she was half-way through them all, the house had become thoroughly restive. Such a difficult audience would be hard to imagine, rustling, whispering going on around, all indignant that she did not stop, but only paused between each long enough to glare before starting the next Prelude, determined to go through, even if nobody wanted to listen.

After that some men sang Spirituals and I stayed on for a few more items, but before leaving after eleven o'clock, when they had not touched the middle of the programme, I heard a girl recite a poem about an artist, a large palette in her hand. An exhibition of purest uncontrolled emotion, as she lay grovelling on the ground at the finish, making me realise I was indeed among "jungle people" and that the veneer of our civilisation and ideas was a very thin one.

We saw the Blue Ridge Mountains where Maryland joins Virginia. It gave me a shock when told we were walking where "John Brown's body lies mouldering in the ground." We had sung about him so often at Christmas parties and never realised he was other than a mythical person.

Dr. Baer took us to Annapolis. The old town was mostly of Georgian architecture, the houses of red brick shipped from England in the old days. Many big box trees were in the gardens. We were told that they too came from England. The court-house stood just as it was built by the first settlers. Narrow planks fitted together formed an imitation of the stone column supporting the portico.

In the ramshackle shops smart uniforms were displayed for the naval cadets; the naval school was on a peninsula close by. In the market darkies were selling their wares, spread out on the cobble-stones. To one side a jetty was flanked by a row of negroes' wooden shacks, all painted brightly in different colours—chocolate, emerald, blue, lemon, scarlet—untidy and in bad repair. Moored to the jetty was a line of white oyster-boats. On any object available along the quay, darkies lay stretched, the old people sat at the house doors. "The lizards are out," Dr. Baer said. It was the first warm day of spring and the sun shone straight down on to their faces as they slept.

By this wharf a group of darkies stood, the centre, a young man over six feet high, round whose legs an old woman clung, gazing up at him, his own eyes focused on something a long way off. Around were women and boys, perfectly still. We presumed it a leave-taking—possibly before a long voyage.

We went to see the court-house, had lunch and then came back to our wharf. Behind, the calm of Chesapeake Bay stretched—beauty of sunlit pale blue and green; in the impalpable sky a few clouds floated lazily, matching the white sailing-craft of which there were many. The group we had seen before was still there, now in shadow, apparently they had not moved—the Slave Block still stood in the Market Place, a reminder of other and more terrible partings.

Ruth Baer was nursing distemper in the kennels and Harold was away at Chicago painting more portraits. Dr. Baer and I indulged our low tastes in musical comedy. He told me of his work during the war, when he was lent by the American Government to the French, which led to his important discovery of a cure for tuberculous bone. He lived long enough to see his discovery working successfully.

Dr. Baer had a great brain and heart: he had sympathy

and understanding for the greatest and the least. His death was a world-wide loss. It was indeed a privilege to have come into such intimate contact with one who could rise to heights of science—and be enthusiastic about painting, the sea, and little silly ordinary things, such as laughing about nothing, and a box of chocolates. His wife Ruth, a rare woman, was his inspiration and helper.

Maryland landscape is reminiscent of England except for the cypress trees dotted here and there. It has the same intimacy. In winter, even the patches of yellow where Indian corn had been cut looked like our unploughed corn-fields, until you walked over them and found great bunches of dead stalks instead of stubble.

While staying with some friends at Potspring near Baltimore, one winter's morning Harold and I were sunning ourselves under the portico of what might have been an old English Georgian mansion. Suddenly our breath was taken away: in a field close by a running fox appeared, then out of a spinney came a pack of hounds, followed by red-coated huntsmen—a scene from an old-fashioned print. We rushed indoors to put on thick boots and follow the chase, only realising we were not in our own country when we saw a crowd of darkies in charge of the remounts.

In the heart of smoky Baltimore, behind Dr. Baer's clinic close to Charles Street, the main thoroughfare, a great magnolia tree burst into display of rosy chalice, a dazzling picture against a blue sky framed by the window that gave Harold light to paint in the room used as a studio.

Before we left for England, the flat flowers made white umbrella shapes of the dogwood trees in the woods; it was impossible to leave America without a pang. The warmth of our welcome in Baltimore had made of it another home. We could count ourselves fortunate, for experience tells me that nowhere can you find better friends than among such American people as we had the privilege to know.

Our trip to England was uneventful, except for the burglary of a cabin close to ours, a suit-case full of jewels taken and several hundreds of pounds.

We were surprised to be allowed to leave the dock without question at Plymouth, where all looked strangely familiar after three months away.

I shall never forget England on that first day of May, so sparkling bright and fresh, the land just one big garden, all so green and cosy, and the pale grey of apple wood—little trees, half whitewashed, set in rows were all ablaze with pink. In the tiny squares of field, fat cattle grazed or toy-like woolly lambs jumped up and down.

We arrived just in time for the R.A. Private View. The sensation made by Dod Procter's "Morning" was already in full blast; headlines in every paper, her name on everyone's lips.

My own picture, "Dressing for the Ballet," was in the same gallery as Dod's. I had the disappointment of finding that the frame-maker had varnished it abominably, as if apricot jam had been poured over it. After it had been exhibited at the Salon, when it got a "Mention," it went to Pittsburg and was returned to me in a terrible state; smoke had eaten into the varnish, patches of light-coloured flesh were darker than the shadows. Bourlet's carman said, "I've seen pictures come back in a mess, but I have never seen anything so bad as that." With spirits and turps I took it off, and took paint off as well. I had to re-engage the models and repaint the whole. This meant a month's heart-breaking work.

The summer of 1927 we spent in Mousehole. Golly had practically given up toy-making, and was working on inlaid woods, heads and figures modelled in half relief.

I painted a picture of a girl standing at the toilet-table in my whitewashed bedroom. Billie Waters posed for it, and Mrs. Dorothy Baker of New York, whom we had met in America, has it now. This marked a further development

of outlook. I did another small picture, also quite important: the head and shoulders of a golden-haired girl; it was bought by Major Bouch. In both these pictures I was determined to get the last fraction of richness in the modelling, and a third-dimensional quality, such as I had not previously accomplished.

CHAPTER XXXIII

ELECTION TO THE ACADEMY

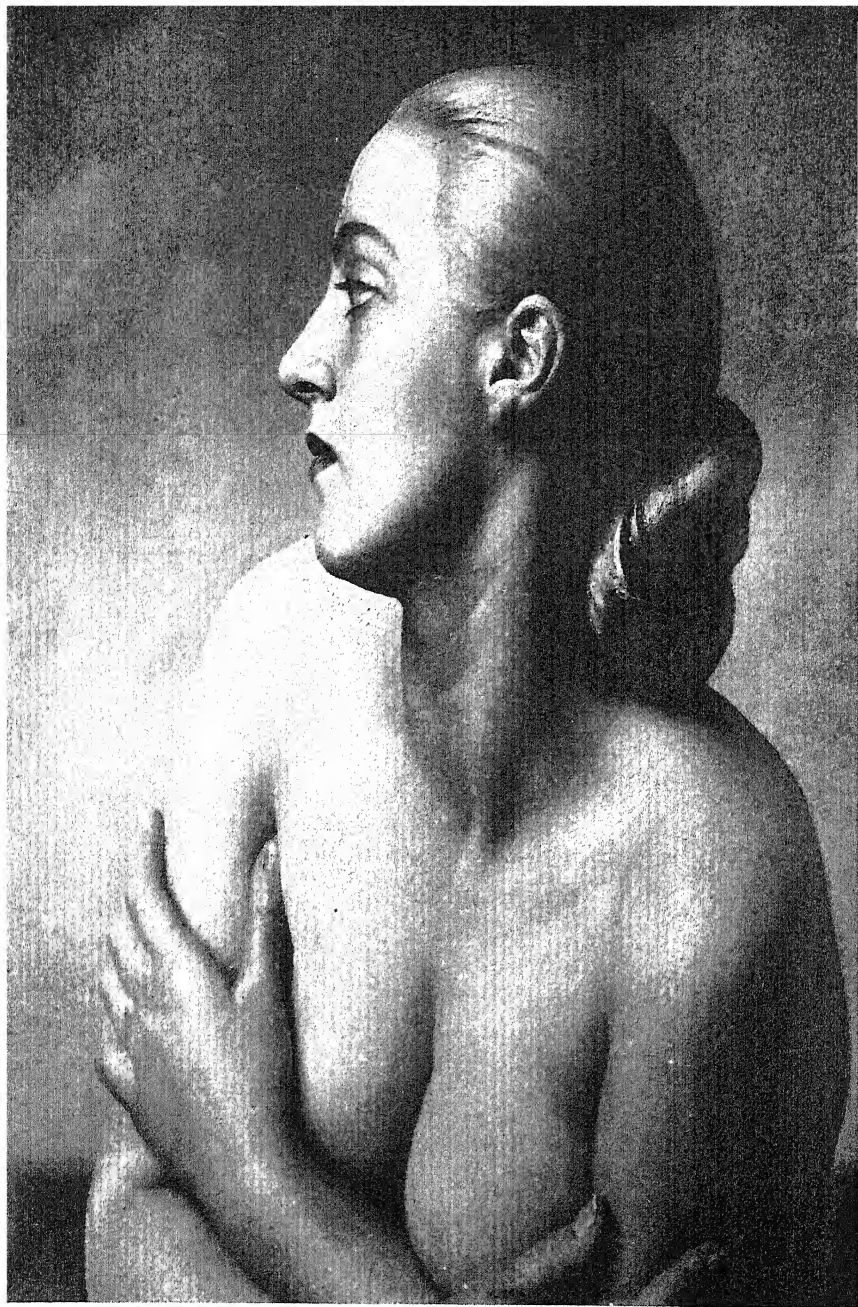
DURING the autumn of 1927 A. J. Munnings told me that there was a chance of my being elected to the Academy.

Ethel and Rae and Mrs. Lucas were dining with us on the evening of the elections. At ten o'clock I had lost all hope, when the telephone rang. I heard A. J. clearing his throat at the other end; it seemed ages before he could get out his news that I had been elected an Associate, and that he was coming straight up to Langford Place.

The front-door bell rang soon afterwards; a group of models had come to bring the tidings and receive the customary guineas. I would have given guineas to anyone that night! They were anxious to know Francis Dodd's address, who had been elected before me on the same occasion. The models were disappointed to learn that he lived at Blackheath, but they got there all the same. They received their guineas and then asked for their taxi fares.

A. J. arrived with Reid-Dick. He told how he had tried for my election so often that the members had all got sick of my name. "Oh, you and your Laura," they said whenever he mentioned me.

Ted and Mrs. Whitney-Smith were giving a party that night; we all went there to celebrate. A. J. was in his best form; from the moment he entered, the party became his. Everyone sat on chairs or on the ground, he stood in the middle, telling them what an important occasion it was, and afterwards recited some of his own poems, among them were "Anthony Bell," "The Old Château," "The Café Royaâl", and, of course, "The Raven." Among his songs were "Julia" and one about Ella Naper and myself vying with others for the most striking dresses. This one had



BLUE AND GOLD



STUDY
1927

been written for a Christmas party at Lamorna years before. Harold and I joined in the hunting choruses with the same vigour as of old times, while the young people patiently waited for dancing to start again. Such times as these make us love A. J. The evening of my life—the finest celebration anyone could have, but I hope it did not completely spoil the Whitney-Smiths' party.

It was late when we walked home; Ethel, Rae and Lukie full of praise for A. J.: he had a performer's talent; he might have made a success on platform or stage, even as he had made in the painting world.

By eight o'clock the next morning an army of pressmen and photographers, some with motor-bikes, had collected round the gates outside 16 Langford Place. A model was due at my studio at ten o'clock; I found another army of pressmen at Marlborough Road Station. When I got home at lunch-time more journalists were waiting; one had become so famished that she had been given the freedom of our ice chest. Harold cursed me for going out; he had been dealing with them all the morning.

Bells rang incessantly, telephone and door bell all day. In the afternoon A. J. came, who brought a letter from Orpen written in red ink—his heart's blood, he called it. A. J. did not want to be recognised or mentioned in the papers, as he sat, back turned, now and again interrupting to augment or correct the statements I was making.

In the evening a blessed lull came. We were looking forward to a little peace when a wretchedly clad journalist was shown in.

It had been difficult all day not to bare my innermost secrets under such efficient cross-examination—here was another difficulty. This poor creature, too late to do anything with the news, just sat looking pathetic. He would not go. Could I give him material for a special interview?

One of the principal dailies had rung up asking if I would write an article. In pity I suggested that he should do it; I would give him the "dope." It was arranged that we

should halve the fee, which he said would be at least fifty guineas.

I rang up the daily. The editor was not there, but one of his staff assured that they were expecting to pay something very substantial. I mentioned fifty guineas, and left it at that. Nightmarish hours followed; the journalist did nothing but stare while I told my tale. He made no attempt to take notes. I do not think he could write or had ever written. I should have had the sense to stop, but I thought he might be hiding his talents under a cloak of mystery. Practically all the work had to be done by myself, and I had never put two words together before. I sweated and sweated; every time I looked for help the man still stared, that was all.

He was to be turned out of his lodgings if he did not pay, he had no food, no overcoat, and it was cold weather. A spare coat of Harold's was found, and more than half this man's share of the fee we expected to get was advanced to him. At last this dreadful work was finished and an article delivered, of which I could only be ashamed. When the fee came from the newspaper it was only three guineas—more than it was worth. I never saw the man again.

In the meantime I was trying to complete a large picture which never satisfied me, a made-up affair, coldly calculated and executed. I was thoroughly ashamed of it at the R.A. next spring, but do not regret the hard study and time spent on it. I was sweating blood at that period to get into a further region. Through the stupendous effort put into that failure and other works of a similar character I reached a higher rung in the ladder. Since those years spent in the endeavour to acquire a more complete appreciation of form, I have felt a greater power of vision and execution.

BOOK V

CHAPTER XXXIV

OLYMPIA CIRCUS

Two or three years before we went to America, A. J. Munnings had taken me to Olympia to be introduced to Captain Bertram Mills, who gave me permission to work in any part of the building.

I was there early in the morning drawing the acrobats' practice on their felts in the balcony above, and during the performances I drew everything behind as the show proceeded. I made friends with the performers and they often posed for me.

I have often tried to analyse the circus appeal. It is the display of indomitable courage that one sees and admires, an admiration inherent in the human race. Gravitation is defied—the impossible is possible. I heard an acrobat say once, "No matter what we come to, we have lived. I was King of the Earth when I was young, the laws that governed other people did not govern me, I could do anything. I clawed my way through the air back to the net once when I missed my grip on the flying trapeze." It is the feeling of defiance for the laws of nature that makes the circus people a race apart; they are one, although gathered from all races. I never felt a stranger among them; their acceptance of me as one of themselves has always seemed a miracle for usually, like fisher-people, they are difficult to know intimately. Circus performers are the hardest-working, the cleanest-living people I have met, with a pride in their bodies, an ideal of attainment, and an infinite capacity for endurance.

All is not for show, some of the most difficult feats appear so easy that they pass unnoticed, but are done for the sake of good work though neck and limb may be broken in the

doing. The artist's spirit is there, from the acrobat at the top of the tent to the clown who runs into the ring to fool, the one actor who creates his own character and part.

After Olympia closed Whimsical Walker came for a month to No. 1 Queen's Road studios to pose for the portrait I painted of him with his "Buffer," whose real name was Whimmy.

All circus dogs are called buffers. There is a rhyme:

Risley kids and slanging buffers,
Lord only knows how they suffers.

Risley kids are the boy acrobats, tossed and turned on the feet of an older boy, who lies on a padded stand with shiny legs and fringe all round. Slanging buffers are performing dogs.

Perhaps there used to be something in the saying, but all the circus animals I have seen are treated well; the dogs are friends of the artistes as if they were human, and so they appear to become. Whimmy was no exception. He was Mr. and Mrs. Walker's "young son" with all the privileges and honour of such a position.

The following winter I was familiar with Olympia, able to work in any part of the building or dressing-rooms.

I often lunched with Captain Mills, when we talked circus. He felt its thrall as I did. I listened with avidity to all he had to tell. His every hour was punctuated by the intricacies of the organisation. He could switch from one detail to another with dazzling speed.

In the second year of my serious work at Olympia, Carmo's horses and many of his artistes, including Togare the lion-trainer, were there. I heard from Captain Mills of the bond that existed between the trainer and "Paris," a particularly fierce beast, and to all others a man-eating lion. On one occasion—I was told—Togare had been obliged to leave, and Paris the lion nearly died of grief, refusing all food. Togare returned—when he entered the place where the dens were, he remained out of sight, the lion heard him call,

and went wild with joy. It would have indeed been madness for Togare to enter the cage then, he would have been hugged and clawed to death. Staying outside, Togare fondled the animal through the bars, talking to it, feeding it with sops for five or six hours until the excitement wore itself out.

I was to know both Togare and Paris intimately later and to witness unexpected happenings in the stable tent where courage and love combined to present dramas no performance in the ring ever equalled.

George Baker, who looked after the cats, had always to be on the look-out for strangers who thought they had special gifts with animals; they looked so tame lying in the dens. I always knew when they were watching through their slitted eyes, by the change in the shape of the muscles round them. "You daren't leave them a moment or some fool will get underneath the ropes," George used to tell me.

One of the Boy Scouts, an attendant, often interrupted my work to tell me of his love for one of the "Millimetre" girls. He was in a mournful state when the previous day had passed without her deigning to look at him. "I do not want or ask anything of her but just this, that she should just let me lie down on the ground in front of her and that she should walk up and down me," he said.

Hans, a round-faced, blue-eyed Swedish groom, looked after the Knapstropers, the Spotty horses—Plum Puddings we called them. They came from Eastern Germany and Russia, and were the only ones of their kind in England at the time, according to the Edinburgh University Animal Research Society, which Society wrote about a picture I exhibited of one of them, inquiring where I found the horse.

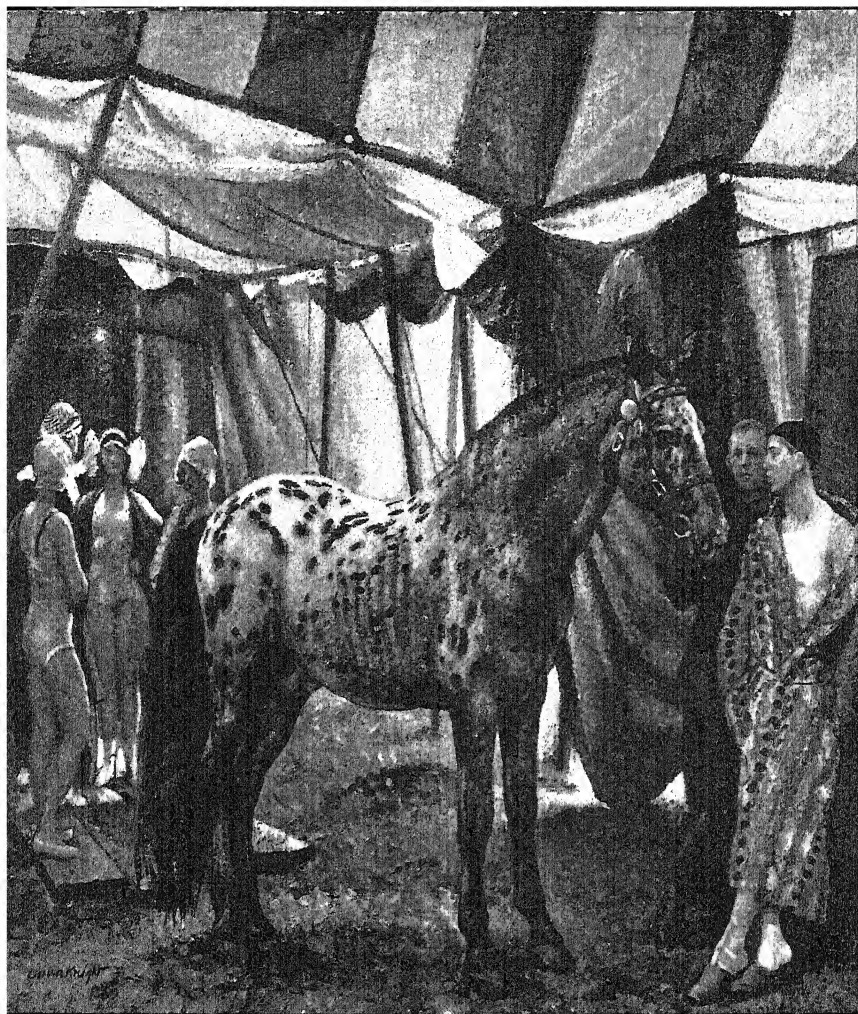
When at Newmarket, staying with Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Palmer, out walking on the heath one morning, George Lambton was exercising his second string. I was introduced to him and he said, "I wanted to see you. I have something to show you." I went to his house that afternoon. A pony,

little bigger than a Shetland, was brought round. It had been sent from the Argentine for Mr. Lambton's young daughter. It was identical in shape, markings and colouring with the horse Sulieman on which I had painted Mona Connor. That picture had been exhibited in the Royal Academy. George Lambton's pony was Sulieman in miniature; grey neck and head, black mane, spots and all.

The other Knapstropers had the same thick neck and primitive horse shape, recklessly splashed on the body as with ink. Hassan was dazzling—a stallion, his head and mane black, his legs black. On his snowy body the spots were jetty; each inky blob had run as on blotting paper. One of the queerest was black, chestnut and strawberry roan mixed—just as if a painter had taken his palette and brushes and tried to make the oddest markings he could—touches of black on the red-brown—touches of brown on the strawberry—"a bit dull, perhaps, here's some white paint, I'll dab on a touch or two—here on the neck—here on the near black hock—just for fun—a real swell clown of a horse—a comedy horse." "It must take a long time to paint all the markings on them," is a remark we often heard. Their names were romantic: Hassan, Blitz, Sulieman, Klingo, Tully.

Two outstanding performers were Matadore and Mazeppa. A study of them is before me as I write. Mazeppa had a long neck that he waved up and down and round about: he thought it swan-like and was proud of it. He was a good worker, clever, obedient and always up to form. Matadore had a queer character. His look said, "No one is going to make me work if I don't want to." His nose was pink, and patches of grey spread over a pink eyelid, making him look incredibly shy. Captain Ankner, the equestrian director, constantly threatened these two with separation. "Matadore stands in his stall next to Mazeppa, telling him not to be such a fool as to work so hard," the grooms told us.

I meet my friends Captain and Mrs. Ankner every year at



HASSAN
1930



THE BATH
1932

the Circus People's Reunion Dinner. Captain Ankner helped me to study any pose of a horse I wanted, for it was useless trying to paint circuses without being able to draw a horse. I loved being in the stables, I loved getting to know each horse's funny ways. People think I ride and have always been familiar with horses; they did not come into my life till circus days. I have always had a passionate fondness for animals, but I did not know how much I could love horses, the way they look at you, the feel of their necks, manes and noses. Horse-sickness comes often for those I was with through so many years, and a longing to run my hand over a satin coat; besides, a great deal can be gained by study of a horse, the line and the subtleties of the modelling are as entrancing as those of the human form. I think I can paint any horse now.

In the morning Olympia is drear inside. Daylight shows in streaks through the strips of tenting cloth overhead. Practice appears curiously lonely and unreal, surrounded by thousands of empty seats. In the stables round, a few lights burn, showing up rows of horses' rumps half hidden by their rugs. Here a groom plaits a long white tail; here a skewbald stands across its stall, a groom brushing it in long arm sweeps, hissing the while; here a door stands open, inside hang rows of brightly coloured harness. "Horse" would spring into your mind wherever you saw the elderly man who, yellow cloth in hand, is shining up the metal studding. In the shadow under the back of the seating the Shetlands are lined; one nibbles another's neck, an old pony stands propping one hind leg against another. The Liberty horses watch through the bars into the building, but all are half asleep.

Practice is over and a man sprinkles patterns with sweet yellow sawdust on the dark tan of the ring, the mist-filled vastness of the building echoes to the banging of the brooms, as the attendants remove last traces of dust.

The horses are dressed. I look along the curve; a row of

heads stick out, each chained from side to side of its stall. One foreleg is extended, pawing impatiently.

The public is coming in. As I stand drawing I must back into one of the partitions, and to finish my subject peer between the legs of a pair of horses. They are now assembling in readiness for the parade as pair after pair come along, nearly encircling the show; from the ring doors, looking back, many necks form richest arches above tucked-in heads, as plumes toss up and down, in protest to the bearing-reins. A white riding costume gleams pearly above a superb black, half hidden by groups of satined and sequined figures, a kaleidoscope of colour in the light streaming through the open curtains. As I make notes, I press myself against the whitened matchboarding of the entrance. The elephants come in. All view is blocked with greyness. A glimpse shows a turbaned Indian astride a monstrous head, silhouetted for a moment against a limelight shaft. The slant of the edge of the seating forms a part background of richest crimson; attached to it, a rope-ladder curves across from above, cords and staves dark against the house. The winter afternoon light combats the electricity and tobacco smoke, rendering the rows of pink faces mistily faint as they rise tier above tier. Subjects, subjects, subjects everywhere. Without selection I fill sheet after sheet of paper with anything in front of me, hoping to memorise the movement. My subject may be Willy Schumann speeding up the entrances, as he stands resplendent in his shiny top-hat and perfectly cut morning suit, or it may be the dwarf Zoli, a weary figure sitting on a carpet barrow, his legs too short to reach the ground; a group of acrobats, their muscles cleanly modelled in the concentrated light as they loosen up; the trapeze artistes drawing their cloaks close round them, or as they kick off the slippers that protect their kid and gold boots; a group of clowns sitting and leaning on a pile of boards, behind them a row of big heads, rosy, shiny, hanging upside down from their strings, with silly grins on their faces, as real as the make-up of the clowns.

I hurry up the stairs to the balcony. At the far end is Whimsical Walker's and Joe Craston's dressing-room. I join in a meal made ready by Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Craston. Whimsical has taken off the top of his clown's dress and his three-pointed wig. His make-up is still on and he is wrapped in his old check dressing-gown. Joe Craston also wears his dressing-gown; his tight-fitting white cap is topped by a black curl. It is difficult to find room on the little table for the tea-things, and the plates of ham and sausages. Some of us sit on boxes, our plates on our knees. The tea-pot stands on the little wash-stand, touching the enamel wash-basin that is aslant in its hole; the water in it is chalky. Both the wash-basin and the jug that stands on the floor are black and white in patches, piebald like the Shetlands. Every inch of three walls is covered; many dresses hang from the hooks, sequins scintillate, crimsons and yellows glow, greens and blues give a cooler note, satin gleams in contrast with the dull white of neck frills. Oddments fill the shelves; false dogs, dolls, hoops, big coloured balls, clown's caps—an incredible amount of gear for the comedy *entrées*.

The two "Buffers" sit on everybody's knees in turn, ready for the titbits.

Footsteps pass constantly, and a clatter of foreign tongues is heard; banging sounds from the dressing-rooms all around, and next door someone is twanging a guitar—a collective cacophony. . . .

Directly tea is over I bring out my sketch-book. I draw Joe nursing his buffer "Bill," who watches me with round black eyes. Turning, I see Mrs. Walker settling Whimsical in an old basket armchair for his nap, his white-stockinged feet propped on another. The gay embroidered flowers show up on the side of the hose where his dressing-gown parts. Behind him are the slatted shutters, "a bit draughty," a make-up towel is fitted round that side of his head, "so he shan't get a touch of his bronchitis. Daddy easily takes cold." As I make a rapid sketch his mouth falls open, a

drooping gape beneath the painted smile. Who would laugh if they now saw the old whitened face?

I steal out, shutting the door with great care, though goodness knows enough noise is going on outside to wake the dead, and practice on a fiddle has joined in to make the pandemonium complete.

I go on to the balcony. Many performers draped and half-dressed stroll up and down—I join Joe and Mrs. Craston. We spend many evenings, between shows, leaning over the railings, watching the fun-fair below. The grey-black of the crowd of sightseers surges about aimlessly—screams come from the switchback and the water-chute. In front of us is a newfangled roundabout with motor-cars instead of horses. It has a queer cant to it, like “modern art.” I make a study of it as a background for a dry point of Joe in his dressing-gown and black curl with a cigar stuck in his vermilion mouth, his handsome, fur-coated, auburn-haired wife by his side. The iron girders spring up from the rails in great curves overhead, zigzagging between the supports as they go, a fine setting for a big composition!

Joe tells me of his adventures.

When travelling with Hengler’s Circus, one of the lions had to be slung in chains over the audience for some special act. On one occasion the chain carrying the lion broke—the beast was free among the audience! A young country girl, one of the public, rushed up and grasped it by the mane—all the circus people expected to see her torn to pieces—it was a particularly savage animal. Hengler called across to her in a gentle voice, “That’s right, my dear; stand just as you are, perfectly still,” knowing as he did that the slightest movement on her part would almost certainly precipitate tragedy. They cleared the house and enticed the lion away. They had terrible difficulty in netting the creature.

When all was over Hengler said to the girl, “My dear, you did a wonderful thing; whatever gave you the courage to think of doing it?” “Oh, that was nothing,” she replied. “It was just like a great big dog.”

Joe was in the ring once when he saw a lick of flame on the canvas of the tent. He quickly passed the word round and went on with his clowning. The fire was put out without the public ever knowing it had started.

He told me of "pulling down" by lantern light, of nights on the road after one day stands, fitful snatches of sleep—hands still holding the reins, red sunrises and new towns and villages half hidden by mist or rain; another day of pitching the tent afresh; another day of the supreme endurance in which they gloried.

Joe was never at a loss for matter or for words; his descriptions were extraordinarily vivid, almost poetic at times; and that poetic strain, I found, was evident in many of the old performers. One thing is certain, these descriptions fired me with desire to go on the road with the circus, and on the first opportunity.

Memory is hazy as to how many Christmas seasons I spent at Olympia: memory is hazy also as to the sequence of events. During one season I received a letter from Major Evelyn Atherley, who had read in the Press of my making studies at Olympia. He came to my studio, and it was arranged I should paint a picture for him. The first thing he asked for was a portrait—Whimsical Walker, standing astride, with the Major's Sealyham terrier "Blinkers" sitting up between his legs. Then came an avalanche of requests: "Can you put Joe Craston in? And Mr. Schumann? And the wire-walker—that man who impersonates a girl? And some horses? And all the other clowns? And Power's elephants? And a portrait of myself?" Then, swiftly changing his mind: "No, I won't be in it myself," etc., etc. We were both excited. I said, "Yes" to everything, and went home to tell Harold I had undertaken the commission. "You are mad; it is not possible!" he said. But do it I would. "It is the sort of commission that Breughel might have received, and I am going to have a shot at it!"

It is fortunate I had a mass of studies to work from; with an immense pack of them I went down to Cornwall in the

spring. In the loft over the carpenter's shop at Mousehole I set to work on my problem—to discover how to put twenty acts, all going on at the same time, in one ring, and to make it look reasonable.

I did a cartoon fifty by forty inches and brought it up to London for Major Atherley to see. He liked the idea, but would not have the skaters or the comedy horses I had included. Back I went to Cornwall again. It was now a jig-saw puzzle with some of the pieces missing. A new cartoon had to be made, everything so carefully placed, even to a fraction of an inch, or some little dog or acrobat would be left out. The second cartoon met with his complete satisfaction; but late September came before I finished the picture, a complicated piece of work. The Major's joy in it was worth the trouble I had taken. At his request I exhibited it in the next year's R.A. under the title "Charivari": "Goliath," the dwarf, gave me the title when I showed him the photograph; he just christened it quite naturally, and his name for it could not be bettered. Many painters, not knowing it to be a commission, thought as Harold had done that I must be mad to paint so odd a picture—it was caricatured in many papers, and the cause of my being labelled a "Circus Painter." It was fun doing it, fitting everything in. Most commissions have limitations: to keep within these limitations, and at the same time present a composition that had aesthetic qualities, was worth trying for. I have a fondness for the picture; perhaps it is because I am like the Major—a circus fan. I am glad I painted it; through it I made a delightful friend. Dear old Major, he died a month or two ago, as I write, at the age of eighty-four, one of the finest gentlemen of the old school. He had been a Major in the Blues. His greatest interest in life had always been circuses—he had even owned them. As an old man, he lived among the people in imagination, he read everything that was written about circuses. We often went to performances together. We never talked about anything else for long, and I saw him frequently.

I painted several other pictures for the Major. One commission he gave me was even queerer than the first—I never had the courage to exhibit it. In one corner is his own portrait and that of his housekeeper holding up “Blinkers” to look at lions performing without a cage. All the beasts are represented over life size, and very fierce, by his special request. Horses are running round, a wire-walker and trapeze artistes perform overhead. Joe Craston is on the ring fence with the ape that only he and its keeper could touch; a pig sits by him spelling out the Major’s pet name P-U-P-P-Y, in cards with letters on them. The central figure is a portrait of Togare controlling the lions.

I did a water-colour portrait of the Major. He is sitting in his black suit and white waistcoat, the pearl in his black tie, his long tortoise-shell cigarette holder in his hand and his billycock hat cocked on one side in the dandy way he always wore it. Behind him is his writing-desk, on it a Portuguese pottery bull, used years ago to hold wine. I invented the two circus pictures that hang on the wall behind him so that he should have three pictures in one. One of them is Togare starting to wrestle with Paris. In the photograph frame on the desk I drew a portrait of Blinkers.

The Major’s house at 15 South Audley Street was filled with trophies, wonderful horn drinking-cups and valuable china. Often in the centre of the luncheon-table was placed a silver model of an old horse-cab with a drunken cabby fallen off his box, made as a record of a wild youthful adventure. His army dress helmet, with its horsehair plume, stood on a table in his study. There was a silver model of one of his horses, a bronze model of another. Contemplating the objects in his room, you could have outlined his life, filling in the details by the study of his albums. Here he is at a race-meeting, here with the hounds, here with a circus, here in the regimental mess; here is a caricature of a shooting-party, here he is one of a group in company with the highest of the land.

The Major was very fond of two friends of mine, circus

performers—Joe and Ally Bert, whom I introduced to him. We promised to attend his funeral when he died; he made a great point that we should. While we were in the car following the procession to Wood Green, Joe Bert said suddenly, "Look what is in front!" There, just ahead of the hearse, was a red and green wagon with "Mills' Circus" on it. Without realising it I said, "I must telephone the Major when I get home and tell him!" The wagon headed the procession for quite a long way and was alongside for miles—an accidental occurrence so extraordinary, which would have delighted the Major. I wish I could have sent the telephone message! I always saved up any titbits of news of that kind to tell him.

CHAPTER XXXV
A FILM STUDIO

MRS. SWYNNERTON was at the R.A. on the Members' first Varnishing Day after I was elected. She had been the first woman elected since the Foundation of the Academy.

Mrs. Swynnerton was then about eighty years old; her small body contained the vitality of youth, her black eyes looked you through and through; cross-grained, she bore a perpetual grudge against men, who, she considered, had always been against her. When she started her career it was not thought possible that a woman's painting could ever equal that of a man. Her work had proved that woman can have great imagination and power of execution. When one considers the struggle she must have had to reach mastery so tardily recognised, her bitterness is not to be wondered at. To add to it, the newspapers had broadcast the fact that I was the first woman to be elected since 1769. I wrote to the Press contradicting the statement, but my letters were never published. It was a relief to me when later on they acknowledged the error on their own account.

We women who have the good fortune to be born later than Mrs. Swynnerton profit by her accomplishments. Any woman reaching the heights in the fine arts had been almost unknown until Mrs. Swynnerton came and broke down the barriers of prejudice, a prejudice natural enough, for woman's life is set in another direction, there have been few who could devote their lives to the arts.

She could scarcely see then, though her eyes were still so bright. I remember exactly what she told me once. "I was painting a big portrait out of doors in Rome; I stood in the sunlight though everyone warned me not to do so, but I wanted my model in the shadow and it was the only thing

to do—I had a heat stroke—it affected my eyes—they were wonderful before that!”

At the Academy luncheon I was taken by surprise when the new Associates were asked to speak. Since that day I have sat at the end of a table with Sir Edwin Lutyens and Adrian Stokes, and with Orpen, before he died. Sir Edwin carries a note-book in his pocket, he pulls it out constantly to draw everything he thinks of with extraordinary fluency and speed; some of the drawings are very funny. He starts a drawing, I go on with it, and it goes backward and forward between us. There is always a good deal of noise coming from our end of the table. Most of the members look forward to those informal luncheons in the refreshment-room downstairs. I should hate to miss one.

Gerald Brockhurst and Harold were elected Associates that first afternoon, at the meeting after lunch. I raced down to the office and telephoned the news to Harold. Lamorna Birch and I went up in a taxi to Langford Place. It is a pity that one can only once live through such times. Lamorna Birch rejoiced as much as I—we had been close friends so many years. Now all three of us were Associates.

One of the film studios asked me if I would give them the opportunity of making a film of me painting a picture with my model. An exact copy of my studio was to be set up in the film studio. Two men consulted with me about borrowing the necessary gear. I had just completed a half-nude figure, which they were extremely anxious to bring into the film. It was decided that they would chance the propriety of including it, and a taxi was filled with various canvases and drawings.

I arrived with two models at the time appointed, four o'clock in the afternoon. The studio set was sumptuous, sunlight streamed through a large window, outside the frame, creepers twined—most picturesque. The easel was set all ready for use; it was tiny, a rococo affair made for a drawing-room and across the top of it a piece of plush was

draped. The studio did not bear much resemblance to my workshop over Butler's garage, where the view from the window only showed the tops of Seymour Hicks's chimney-pots, but I was assured it would come out all right, so we started to select the particular pictures for display. A crowd of serious-faced men discussed the advisability of the semi-nude, while I watched the red in their faces turn to bright blue in the lights, the veins of their noses looking as if they had been scrawled in ink. A slight delay was caused while one of the producers went away. He returned with a length of pink chiffon floating, which he proceeded to drape across the offending breast of my painted maiden—then I had to interfere, and we compromised by placing another canvas partly in front of her nudity.

I do not know how many feet or yards of film were used up. My models and I acted everything that was ever done in a studio that we and the producers could think of, from the doing of a drawing, to a tea-party, and the advent of a lady visitor. It was no use my protesting that I never had tea-parties in my studio, it was necessary for the tale. I was made to paint standing an inch or two from my canvas, so that the camera-man could see my profile, hand, brush, picture and the model all together. I got weary standing about, and my model very bored on her throne. In a rest, as I watched her idly rubbing her bare back, suddenly there was a violent shout behind me, "Let those damned spots alone!" Poor Eileen dropped her hand quickly, but the camera-man was not referring to her scratching, but to some limes that had been interfered with.

When we had taken off our make-up and were bidding our hosts good-bye, a man said to me, "You've been under the arcs five hours; you'll have slight sunstroke after this."

I went from the studio to Esmé de Peyer's first recital and arrived just after it had finished, but was in time for the supper at Appenrodt's; Edith Bartlett, his wife, and Ethel, Edith's sister and Rae Robertson, John Barbirolli, Tito, as

we all call him, and Harriet Cohen, were among the party. I woke up next day with sore eyes and a giddy head.

We saw a great deal of Arnold Bax at that time, a sensitive nature, shy and retiring. When Bach was played he always left the room. I understood that it was the regular beat as of an insistent hammer that made it impossible for him to sit and listen to that composer's works. My rock and sea pictures appealed to Arnold. He sent me to hear his symphony, of which rocks had been the inspiration; he thought there was a certain relation in our work. I saw my own rocks in his music that night. Arnold has often said, "Laura, if the objective in your work could be fused with the subjective in mine, what a perfect combination it would make."

CHAPTER XXXVI

"MOTLEY"

THE year I painted "Charivari," just after Olympia closed, I started a big composition called "Motley." Whimsical again stayed on expressly to pose in the dress that he wore for twenty years at Drury Lane. That dress is now in the London Museum, together with Grimaldi's, Garrick's, and Pavlova's costumes.

My little room at 1 Queen's Road studios, more than half filled with old frames and other junk, was again turned into a dressing-room for Whimsical, his make-up table my carpenter's bench. Every part of the studio was fuller than ever; tarlatan skirts, wreathes of artificial flowers, pink satin shoes, silk tights, the cotton sawdust-filled sausages and the stuffed duck, all mixed with paints, bottles of oil and turps, or hanging on easels and framed pictures and canvases.

The whole place was crowded: Barbara Bonnar posing as Columbine and Nan Kearns as dresser; Van Lucas, Lukie's oldest boy, came as a Harlequin in an old dress which I hired from Nathan's.

Space was cleared for lunch at the little oak table that had belonged to some remote ancestor, used in our kitchen when I was a little child. Nan fetched the meal from the Cookery School on the Finchley Road. She was the only one in a sufficiently reasonable state to go out for it.

Whimsical found fresh tales to tell. A garden-party planned by Dan Leno at his country residence, Whimsical invited to help entertain. An early start from London in a new pair of patent-leather shoes, the bottle of champagne that Dan Leno and he shared on his arrival, a stack of bottles that formed the central ornament of the lawn, Mrs. Leno

retiring to bed for the day, twenty pounds' worth of fireworks that were to have made the grand display, all touched off by the Leno children in one big explosion during the morning. Of the visitors and the party not a word was said. The cook and the other servants were found all drunk in the kitchen when dinner should have been served. At three o'clock in the morning, Whimsical, determined to go home, stood at the entrance of the grounds, his feet incredibly painful—he had eaten nothing all day. An early milk-cart passed, he hailed it; his patent-leather shoes that he had taken off were shaken out and lost *en route*. When, at the end of his drive, he got out in his stockinged feet, a crowd was gathered and a woman, sympathising with him, said, "You are just too late to see the body." There had been a bloody accident. He went to a police station and borrowed an equally painful pair of boots to walk home in.

Perhaps there was too much entertainment for me to do my best work. I tried to dissociate myself from the gaiety, but it was overwhelming. The young people were having the time of their lives, and Nan in her Irish way drove her load of fun over us all like a car of Juggernaut. Amazing plans were made. Whimsical had a play in which we were all to take part. He was to do his "Fishing Act" in mime for our guests at Langford Place. Neither came to anything. Whimsical could never realise that he was then nearly eighty years old. The fact that he was feeling poorly on the last day of our six weeks' work did not deter him from coming to pose or from carrying out the last comedy that had been talked over for days.

Instead of Nan going alone to fetch our lunch, Whimsical headed a procession dressed in his complete clown's make-up, with the Columbine by his side in ballet dress, flowers, pink shoes and all. Nan, wearing a brilliant shawl, followed them. I was behind at a discreet distance, fearing notoriety, and rather on my dignity as a newly elected A.R.A.

The party marched up the Finchley Road to the Cookery School, which was full of people sitting at tables. Straight

in went Whimsical, slapped his cotton duck and sausages on the counter. To the harassed lady who was hurriedly serving her customers he said, “Cook these, please, and if you make them tender I will give you another Gold Medal.” All round the room certificates and diplomas hung which he had taken in at a glance.

Nobody smiled or hardly looked up from their food. There was no sensation! They thought us just a crowd of beggars. A like disappointment met us in the street. People hurried by without turning round, just as if the great Whimsical Walker were to be seen in all his regalia walking the streets every day. The road was under repair as usual. I *had* to tell one of the workmen, “That is Whimsical Walker the famous clown.” The man gawped and he was the only person who took the slightest notice.

Before the waiting-room at Marlborough Road Station was renovated it presented a perfect model for a theatrical set in which to enact a scene of despair. It was painted chocolate red about eight feet up, above the pale green walls towered to a great height, looking like a funnel set on end. No light came through the big window at the side, a brick wall outside close to it. A fire was rarely lit in the small black fenderless grate, and one unprotected gas-jet gave just enough light to show up the oak-grained bench and table. Mrs. Whimsical often fetched her husband from my studio and I would go down to the station to see them off. We always had to wait a long time for a train, when this room became a standing joke. One cold foggy afternoon a lady stepped across the threshold. Her jaw dropped as she took in the look of the room, her eyes popping out as if she could not believe what she saw. We were near the door at the time when Whimsical bent over and whispered hoarsely in her ear, “They have just taken the corpse away.” She was quick-witted too and before turning back into the fog she replied, “Well, I am glad to hear they have removed it.”

Whimsical planned that he and Nan should act a tragedy there. They were to smuggle in a bundle that might be

made to look like a body pushed under the bench. Whimsical, knife in hand, was to be stepping on to a train about to move, Nan was to rush out of the waiting-room screaming loudly. Whimsical assured us that he could get away with anything when he told the police who he was. . . .

Joe Craston was not at Olympia the next year. Whimsical had a dressing-room all to himself built under the seating to save him the journey upstairs. "Whimmy," the "Buffer," remembered me—I could go into the room where he was left on guard without any protest from him. A nail on the wall was kept for my special use. "A nail to let," Whimsical would write and inform me every year. That room was my studio and dressing-room as well.

One morning before I left home Barry Jackson had rung me up and told me that one of the film studios was showing a special circus picture to himself and a few other people that afternoon. Would I care to come? While lunching with Captain Mills that day he told me he too had been invited. We went together in his great car.

Tea was ready for the guests. Barry Jackson, George Bernard and Mrs. Shaw, Scott Sunderland, Paul Shelving, Bostock of Bostock's Circus, which was then at the Crystal Palace, André Charlot, Captain Mills and myself.

Scott introduced me to G. B. S., who said: "Howdoyoudo" in an absent manner. A few minutes he came back smiling and in the warmest way shook my hand again saying, "Oh, you are *Laura Knight*. I did not know that. Scott just said 'Mrs. Knight'; you might have been any Mrs. Knight." I was polite, but turned away as soon as possible.

In the private theatre I sat between Mr. Charlot and Captain Mills, Mr. Shaw immediately behind. The picture opened with a caravan scene. A child was being ill-treated by a circus proprietor. A hand tapped Captain Mills on the shoulder and Mr. Shaw leant over and in an impish way said, "That's you."

The name of the film was "The Five Devils." Everyone

confessed afterwards to having shed a tear or two, except Mr. Shaw, though even he was moved. At the film office everybody offered to write their good opinion of the picture. Mr. Shaw again excepted. The Tivoli engaged it, where the astonishing happened; it was coldly received, nor did it draw the public.

Before we dispersed that evening, Captain Mills asked us to come back to Olympia for the show. Only Barry and Scott were able to accept his invitation. Harold joined us and we had supper afterwards in the restaurant, Scott in the seventh heaven of happiness because I was able to introduce the Bronett clowns and the dwarf Goliath to him. Scott would have liked to be a clown himself.

Barry rang me up again to tell me that he was bringing Mr. Shaw to the circus. Would I look out for them and come up to their box? The news that G. B. S. was to be among the audience caused quite a stir among the circus people.

Between shows I was in the dressing-room used by Con Colliano, a stylist on the wire. He danced the tango and could turn a forward somersault. He told me: "If when I land I can feel the wire with my right foot between the ball of the big toe and the outer edge of my heel, I know I am all right." To the uninitiated it may seem as simple to turn a somersault frontways as backwards. The difficulty is that from the time of taking the first leap the wire is out of sight. He was a proud, tigerish figure as he paced up, down and round his little room with feverish liteness, dressed ready for the show in his yellow and black satin. "Do you know that George Bernard Shaw is going to be in the house to-night?" I asked. He stopped his walk for a moment and looked puzzled. "What name did you say?" "George Bernard Shaw," I enunciated carefully. "George Bernard Shaw," he repeated, then resuming his pacing said, "I guess I don't seem to know that name." When I recounted this to Barry he laughed and said he should enjoy telling the tale to G. B. S.

While I was in the box a journalist came seeking an interview. "Yes, I will give you one, but my fee is five hundred pounds," said Mr. Shaw. Whimsical came up, and when Mr. Shaw shook him by the hand Whimsical said, "It is very nice of you to shake hands with an old clown." "It is just one old clown shaking hands with another," Mr. Shaw replied. I left him and Barry, to continue my studies behind. The Boy Scout with the round spectacles who had been dying of love for the "Millimetre" girl came and asked me, "And what does Bernard think of the show?"

It interested me enormously to study Con Colliano; his build was perfect. His shoulders made a lovely fan shape from his slender waist as he poised on the wire, the sheen on his silk stockings outlining his muscular, finely cut legs as in queer poses he recovered his balance above the heads of the crowd. I made many quick drawings from him; one done while he was engaged in the act of landing after a somersault, just as I brought it home, is reproduced in the "Studio" volume of *Modern Drawings* published in 1932.

CHAPTER XXXVII

D.B.E.

THE following spring Captain Mills and Mr. Carmo put a show on the road. Major Atherley and I hired a car and went to Catford to see it just after it opened. The paint was fresh and shining, lemon and red. In the field the hedges were sprinkled with early green like chopped parsley. The tent was new; in the sunlight its billowing whiteness was modelled dazzlingly, the blue shadows on the far side sharp against the early May sky. Inside all was aglow as with a powdering of gold. While wandering round the stables before the show opened, one particular scene impressed me: between the canvas wallings a carpet of green, untrampled grass ran. Along one side my old friends, the Shetlands, among whom were Tiny, Toddler and Tony, stood in their wooden stalls. In another stall were two zebras, the markings on their heads and manes plushy and rich as they showed above the ponies' backs. A row of rosy walling-poles supported the canvas, which by dint of its own weight formed rich sagging curves. Near the zebras' stall a fair-haired woman held up a hand-mirror for a clown with silvery-whitened face to add touches to his make-up. Clown's breeches flared on his legs, his body clad only in a singlet. It was warm in there after the spring keenness outside, hazy as if glazed with a cadmium yellow, filled with a sense of peace, and the animals were dozy in the comfort. The beauty and remoteness from the world outside gripped me. "I Must put everything else on one side and join this wandering city, complete in itself. I Must get those two people to pose for me, I Must paint this glamour." The man and woman were Joe and Ally Bert; we were to become travelling companions.

It was impossible to join the circus immediately, for I was engaged on a picture called "The Ballet Girl and Dressmaker." Earl Hoover had been to my studio when "Motley" was just completed, and he would have bought the picture had it not been too large for him to hang. It was arranged that I should paint another picture specially for him, using Barbara Bonnar again for the principal figure.

My own dressmaker, Miss Ferguson, posed for the other figure; her hands and type were perfect. The composition was built in the form of two interlacing pyramids. To me it is more difficult to arrange two equally important figures together than three. However, my two pyramids worked and the picture went through from start to finish without the slightest alteration, one of those lucky ones that paint themselves without disagreement with the painter. Barbara, a vital and sparkling young creature, was rehearsing for a show at the time and many of the sittings had to take place in the early morning before she went to the theatre.

Mr. Hoover was delighted with the result. I sent it to the R.A., and it went to Carnegie Institute, Pittsburg, afterwards. Mr. Hoover did not place it in the office of his new carpet-sweeper building in Chicago as originally intended; instead it was hung in his own house. To fill the gap on his wall while it was away I lent him "Motley," which I had cut down considerably when it came back from the R.A. In the end, Mr. Hoover kept both pictures.

The "Ballet Girl and Dressmaker" was reproduced in a good many papers, and as a result I received the letter from a stranger which I quote here. To make clear my delight in its receipt I must confess to being an enthusiastic Wild West fan. Tales of broncs, prairies, buttes, and two-gun men hold a fascination I cannot resist. I have heard of others who have similar vices. Rae Robertson reads detective stories, cowboy tales bore him. His preference is hard to understand, there is such a comfort in knowing that the villain always dies from a single shot and the hero

can be literally riddled with bullets and still live to be as good as ever. The letter:

“THE RANCHMENS CLUB (STAFF)

“CALGARY, CANADA.

“March 3rd, 1931.

“DEAR LAURA,

“Me and Alkali Alf and Cottonwood Bill an the Cow Foreman ave just been a drinkin of your ealth in ‘The Bucket of Blood.’ We’ve come to the conclusion that you be all right an if ever you be in the Great Open Spaces where men are men you must ave a glass of beer along o’ we.

“We be just a lot of ignorant uneddicated cow-punchers an pologrooms, without book larnin, an we know nothing about eyebrow art critickism.

“In them circumstances you won’t feel flattered when we tell you that you done a dam good job when you painted that pitcher ‘Ballet Girl an Dressmaker.’ Alkali Alf sez that the drorin an the modellin o’ them features an them limbs is good enough for Mike Angello or Rembrandt. An anyone in the Cow country will tell you as ow Alkali Alf be a person of savvy. The Cow Foreman sez the Ballet Girl be a helluva swell-looking jane with the right kind o’ legs for topping off bronks and a face such as only grows on gals wot as quite the right sort of savvy.

“An the dressmaker? Yes! Wot abart er? Cottonwood Bill wot was born in Derbysher, which is a dam good place to be born in, sez that dressmaker be a dam capable woman. You can tell that she be absoloot master of er job. Cottonwood zes she be the sort of dame wot ud look after er man and bring er kids up respectable.

“You also done a dam good job when you dry pointed them two Zebras.

“Now lisson ere Laura, dont you take no notice of them critickism blokes wot write in the eyebrow papers that Dame Knight is not so large on a small canvas as she

is on a big one an she as committed the unpardonable sin of representing natur faithfully on canvas. Good old John Collier sez that art criticks from the great Leenardo down ave talked more rot than anyone else on earth. Wotever the criticks say, just you remember the Boys of the Crescent Bar Outfit love you as deerly as ever, but not avin no book larnin we don't know ow to express it, you an good old Alf Munnins ave done more than anyone else to bring tears of joy to our eyes.

"Eres to you Laura, and we hope that this summer you'll flabbergast the ole bloomin Royal Academy. An dont forget we be a watchin of yer.

"Please understand, Laura, that *we dont want you to answer this letter*, never mind wot it sez in 'The Book of Etiquette.' We would ate like ell to think that we had caused you to waste your vallible time on us. *Now you dont owe us nothing*, but you've given us so dam much real pleasure that we feel we do owe you this letter. If you feel you absolootely must answer, dont waste more than a post card. That'll satisfy a lot of low-down orsey fellows and beastly common cow people, including,

"HARRY BACKHOUSE."

The spelling is exact—almost too wonderful to be actually written by a cowboy. It was, I know, quite genuine, a tribute that warms my heart whenever I think of it. I value that letter and shall always keep it.

In 1929 I had received a letter which also seems worth quoting:

"Dame Laura Knight,
"Newlyn,
"Cornwall

"P.O Box 451,
"BULAWAYO,
"S. RHODESIA.

"DEAR MADAM,

"The writer has just returned from a two thousand miles' trip through Central Africa, and during the trip I came across an incident the knowledge of which may be of interest to you.

"Late one afternoon I arrived at a Kaffir Kraal, and was offered hospitality by the chief, who during the ensuing conversation informed me that on the previous night six lions attacked his Kraal and killed a native boy, a goat and an ox, would I stay the night and if possible kill the lions, offering me if I consented his private Kia (hut) for accommodation. I consented and on entering the Kia I was surprised to see several pictures painted by well-known artists.

"Amongst the number was a copy of one of your pictures.

"The scene was the top of a cliff, looking down upon a bay. Lying on the cliff was a girl reading a book, standing near another girl wearing skirt and jumper. Perhaps you will remember the subject. I enquired if he found pleasure in having the pictures, what was it that induced him to buy that particular one? He replied that he had never seen the sea, that the girls were maniga mush (very pretty), that if he had been a Bwana M'Kubwa (big white master) he would make them both his wives, etc., etc.

"I trust that the above incident is of sufficient interest for me a stranger to have written upon.

"Yours faithfully,

"James H. Schofield."

The picture that Mr. Schofield writes of is one painted close to my hut on Lamorna Cliffs in Cornwall, the girl in the jumper is Phyllis Crocker; the other one, the model who laughed when Mr. Pentreath offered the loan of his picture. Both pictures were painted the same year and were sold at the Leicester Galleries.

The one the Kaffir chief had was reproduced in the *Tatler*. Possibly what Mr. Schofield saw was a coloured reproduction cut from that magazine.

On the first of March 1929 I went to the Court of St. James to receive the honour Dame Commander of the Civil

Division of the British Empire. The grant is signed by Her Gracious Majesty the Queen Mary and His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, on behalf of His Majesty the King, who was seriously ill at the time. On that occasion the Prince conferred the Orders in place of his Royal father.

Barry Jackson offered to take me to and from the Palace in his Rolls-Royce. Unfortunately it met with an accident the day before, so his other car was used instead, which was green instead of the black and yellow which I had matched in my costume. Seated in the car I drew on my yellow gloves, when clouds of powder flew out of them, covering Barry's coat and my black velvet jacket. I shook them hard out of the window, but more and more dust came out; it was hopeless to try to wear them. The car was turned into Edgware Road and the chauffeur told to stop at the first likely shop. In a great hurry I, fearing I should be late, asked the assistant for white kid ones, the safest after my experience with the others. It was not a stylish shop, such articles could not have been asked for there for many years. From a top shelf an old cardboard box was reached down; in it only one pair my size. When back again in the car I put them on, they were so tender with age that the right hand split. We dared not spend any more time on purchasing fresh ones—I had to rehearse how to hide the damage.

I arrived in good time. Going up the great stairway, I chanced to glance overhead, and up on the top landing two women domestics were leaning over the railings to watch us come in—a homely touch that was pleasing.

All down one side of the room where we were waiting, the gilt corniced windows reached to the floor. The sun streamed in, reflecting brilliance in the gold that nearly covered the men's uniforms and in the medals and orders they wore. This time the men were the show pieces and we women looked drab in contrast, but the spectacle and occasion were awesome. Everyone was a stranger to me except Lillian Bayliss, who knowing I was nervous stayed at

my side talking of the theatre and mutual friends; she had the technique for inspiring courage in those about to face an ordeal. At a signal the woman and the men were put into separate groups, and we were then coached as to what it was correct for each recipient of an order to do at the presentation. "No woman must kneel," we were told, and when he had finished a lady went straight up to the man and said, "Must I kneel?" She had been too nervous to listen. During this talk I sat with my torn glove hidden, envying the unrestrained movements of the suède-covered hands belonging to the lady who sat next to me, when suddenly she said, "I see you are wearing white kid gloves; I suppose all of us ought to have done that."

Eventually we were lined in order of rank to be conferred and I lost Lillian Bayliss, who was receiving a higher distinction. The clock hands reached the stroke of eleven—a whisper went round: "The punctuality of kings." The doors parted, disclosing at the far end of the suite the Throne Room where His Royal Highness was seated. At each door was a man in medieval costume holding a halberd, the staff covered with red plush, brass-studded.

In front of the Prince stood four guards, white feather plumes in their helmets, drawn swords in their hands. When each person's turn came, he or she stepped between these guards and His Royal Highness, while he pinned on the order and shook hands.

Lillian Bayliss and I left the Palace together. It gave me a thrill to find a big crowd of ordinary people like myself outside waiting to see us come out. One tall figure stood out, Scott Sunderland, who was waving madly. We got into Barry's car and came up to Langford Place to tell Harold all about what had happened and to pin on the orders anew.

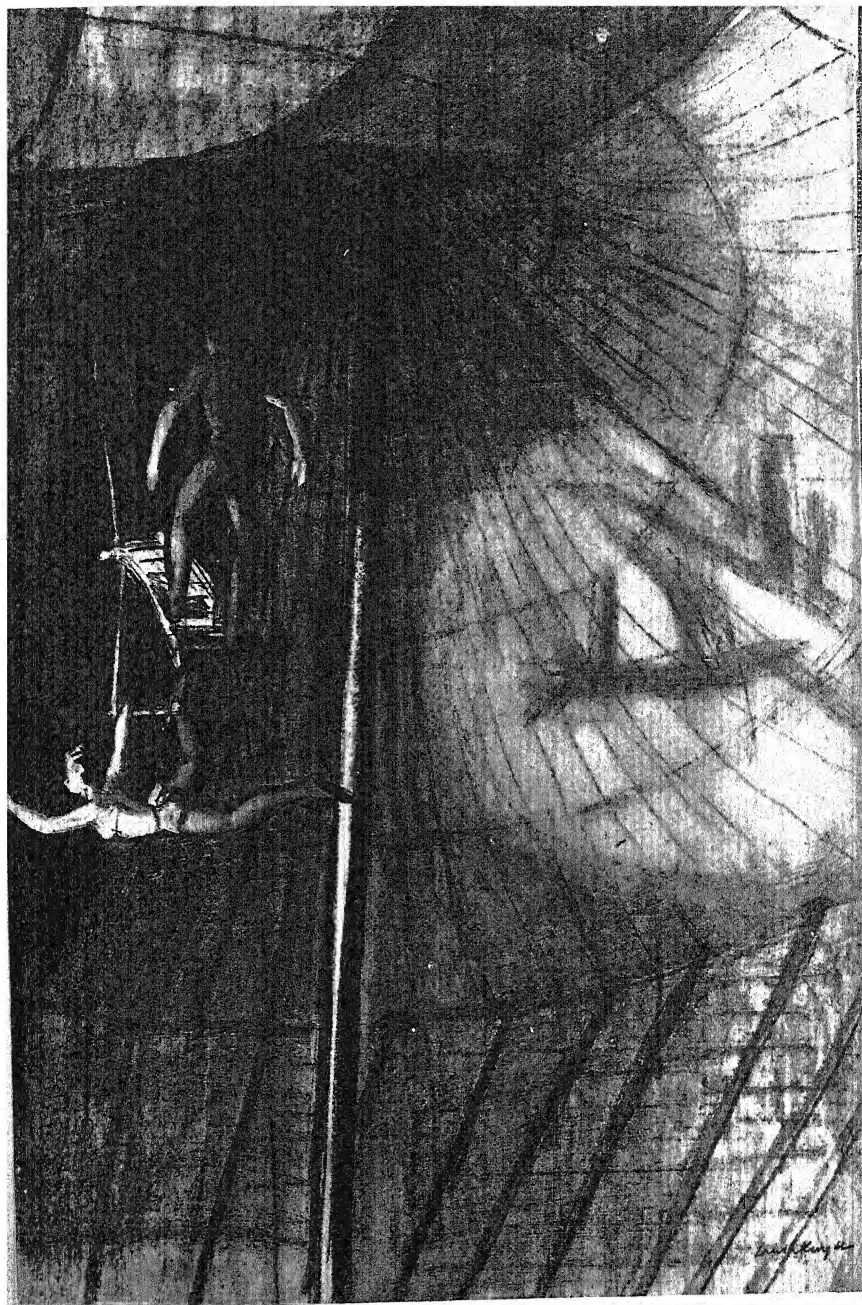
The next week was completely occupied in answering letters. At the next Members' Varnishing Day I sat next to Mrs. Swynnerton. She offered congratulations. With the utmost sincerity I assured her that, instead of myself, I

wished that she had been the recipient of the decoration. "Did they give it to you as the first woman to be elected to the Academy?" she asked. "No, certainly not," I replied. Then in a gracious way she said, "I am glad it has been given to you; no one deserves it better."

We spent a wonderful hour and I came closer to her than ever before. A brave little figure in her purple Indian blouse. Coupled with the joy in my new distinction was a fear that the honour I had received was but adding to her bitterness.



THREE GIRL ACROBATS
1931



ON THE HIGH TRAPEZE AND LADDER
1931-1932

CHAPTER XXXVIII
ON THE ROAD WITH CARMO

I JOINED the circus when it had reached Chatham. Randy was there, the clown I met at Islington twelve years before, the only artiste I knew personally, but I had a welcome from all. Ally Bert constituted herself my helper, retrieving pocket-knife, india-rubber and money-bag when I dropped them.

One day a fête took place in a field over the brow of a hill at the top of our tober. The circus had given a free matinée to the children, who came in charge of a sailor dressed as Charley's Aunt. This *funny man* told Joe he had only a few weeks before completing his service for pension. Joe told him "Watch himself." "I am looking out for that," he said. Our evening show over, we dispersed and did not know until next morning that, while our band blared close by, there had been an accident in the "mock fire," an item of the pageant. The sailor and nine Boy Scouts had been burnt to death.

It was hard for the circus to go on in that gloom.

As usual, I had taken only sketch-books and pencils; more piles of drawings accumulated. "All can never be made use of. Why not try painting on the spot?" I thought; this, in spite of lighting difficulties and being in the way of everything going in and out of the ring.

I returned home to fetch painting materials. When I rejoined at Margate, Ally had found lodgings for me at Mrs. Smallbones's that had a room in which to keep my stack of canvases and paints and to use as a studio if necessary; I never did use it.

The circus held my whole interest. I was there all day; I could leave it only to go back to sleep.

When I left the station at Margate I wanted to paint the town itself, all the tawdry pleasures, and the sea like a big bath tub.

I forgot about Margate when I reached the top of the cliff where the big top was pitched, not far from the edge of the steep white rock.

The weather was fine, there were bathing-parties in the morning. A gentle breeze, the smell of the sea in it, ran through the tent. The level white line of the water could be seen through the tied-up wallings, a background to the ponies in their stalls.

When I arrived the ground was still untrampled and everything fresh, sparkling and clean. While standing one glorious day in the stable tent, all detail aglow in an ambient haze, Joe Bert, in his simple way, said, "When the grass is green below and the canvas is all white above, it makes an old performer open his nostrils wide."

Months and years out of work were forgotten. It was a great show. It was going good. It was going to be a fine summer.

All were keen on doing their best. The love of the life was evident, its constant change and moving on to fresh places. A sense of unending calm prevailed which communicated itself even to the stock. The elephants swayed lazily to and fro, the lions basked in the warmth and comfort. Sometimes on a blazing day they all crowded into one den, packed like sausages, lying in ridiculous attitudes, some on their backs, mouths wide open showing all their teeth, paws waving feebly. "Look at the king of beasts," people would say and laugh. If one moved all must move, though the adjoining den was empty but for one beast. He, feeling lonely, must join his fellows. He would let all his legs go loose as he flopped into the middle of the heap. The others grumbled in a silly whine at the intrusion, too lazy to move—another animal would be squeezed out. Through the space at the bottom of the dens paws flopped, inert, one hung at a right angle, harmless looking, its back covered with brown

fur, white tipped, the other paw turned, squeezing through the opening to show the pretty pattern of black pads underneath, each separated by a line of short tufted hair. Other paws pushed lazily against the bars, displaying in the pulse of their expansion the fierce arching curve of the talons. From some great throat a roar broke the silence, feeble in comparison to the chorus which would ensue. Still lying on their backs, too lazy to get up, heads upside down, eyes closed, they roared and roared, till the noise was deafening. Shouts of "Shut up!" would be added to the tumult. To everybody's surprise they occasionally obeyed the order you scarcely heard, then all was as before till another lion started a diversion.

Every morning, at the back of the field, out of sight of the public visiting the menagerie, practice took place: Bonnelly trying to learn to walk the wire, wearing a striped blazer and old black trousers, in his hand a Jap sunshade or a pole. Up he steps carefully—he's got his balance—a wobbly step or two—a short run—he tries to make a swift turn—off he comes before rocking backwards and forwards on the wire, suspended from scissor-pole to scissor-pole.

The two Hanson boys wear on their heads the padded caps they perform in, their old white duck trousers kept in place by a bright-coloured belt, as stripped to the waist they rehearse; the muscles of their arms, backs and shoulders lump up or lie slab-like, clean, chiselled, powerful; the ivory of the skin sweats and glistens in the open daylight. Behind are the stable and the hands' tents, grey, white, green-striped, red-striped; the varnish still shines newly on the wagons; the black of the tractor-engines provides a deeper note and from the stack of one a thick smoke rolls. A long line of handsome white leather gloves hang suspended on a line, drying ready for each fresh entrance into the ring that Captain Ankner must make with his Liberty horses or the "Plum Puddings." The sky overhead is a cool blue, across which streaks of white are flung.

A black cat strolls around the tober with haughty stride. That cat was, like myself, a circus fan; he adopted the show. Every time we moved we thought we had lost him, but every time he appeared again—he was not going to leave the circus. We never knew in which wagon he hid.

He pretends he does not know that “Astie,” the Ankners’ pride, a fat white terrier, is nosing about, his short pointed face poking with interest into every new and ancient smell, yelping in high staccato barks at horses’ heels. “Astie, Astie, Astie,” Mrs. Ankner’s voice calls. At last the rascal is caught, a grunt issues from his portly body as he is tucked under an arm to preserve him from further indiscretion.

The artistes retire, for a rub-down and a change.

Some run down to bathe. Mackintoshes and rugs are spread out for a sleep or a rest, or for a gossip in the shadow thrown by a wagon. It is near noontide now, the sun is strong. Dinner-time is close.

“Look sharp—get a move on—we open at half-past two. I’ve got your zinc powder and some fresh lard; they’re all robbers here. It was only fourpence at Chatham, they’re charging sixpence ha’penny here—they must think we’re visitors. It’s on the shelf in the wagon. Come on you two; one’s as bad as the other. Here give me your canvas.” This from Ally, who speedily gathers my scattered materials, pencils and sketch-book full of notes of the moving figures, paints and canvas on which I am painting Herbert Hanson in his dressing-wagon. Joe and I are bundled off to eat the chops, tomatoes and potatoes Ally has made ready on a little oil stove. The stove is set in the middle of the clown’s tarred dressing-wagon, used to carry the V’s and brackets on the road. Inside, the savoury smell of food mingles with that of burning oil, a hiss sounds from the kettle put on to replenish the tea-pot. On the travelling boxes and trunks almost covered with labels from all parts of the world we take our seats. We eat with appetite, braced by the sea air, Joe with his exercise, I with my work and Ally by her walk in the town to search for the shops that sell the best bread,

the best meat and chickens, the best tea and fruit. A tumbling clown must have his food chosen and cooked with care. He is in training month in and month out. He must do his hand stands, the roundall-flip-flap back, which goes with a rrr-rrr-rrr-rrrr and other feats even when he feels not any too good.

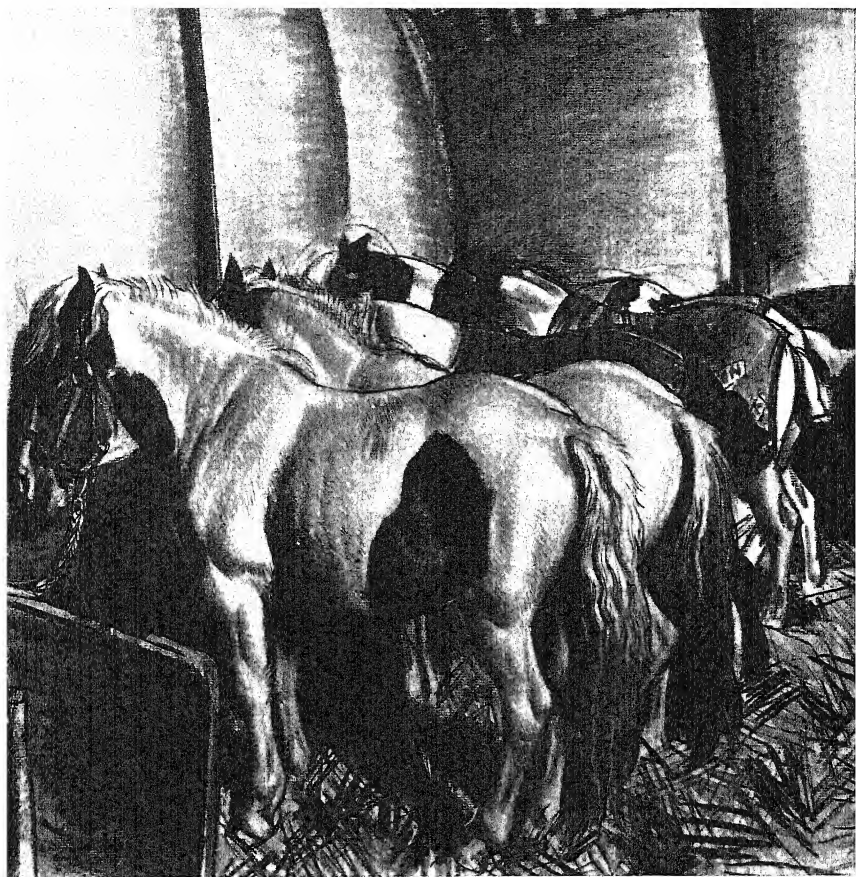
Hanging at the mouth of the wagon, where we take our meal, is a length of old Willesden, to be pinned across when lights are lit and to help keep out the rain and wind. Three clowns, a gymnast, and an old Arab who takes the tickets at the entrance, all dress in there. Along the sides make-up shelves are irregularly spaced, each piece of three-ply is pierced at the corners and threaded with string to suspend it from a batten. These boards are splodged with red and black and powdered with white, and wax drippings lie in little grey-white mounds with the remains of burnt-out wick languidly slanting among the mess. Large-spotted, striped and flowered dresses together with comedy evening-suits hang from nails, almost covering the walls. Between them Mr. Marba's life-sized dummy lady hangs by a string at her waist, doing a side bend that would be possible to no human, her legs dangling, toes turned in, her arms hanging loosely on either side of her head; even though upside down, she retains her cheerful expression, her long-lashed blue eyes open and ogling in spite of an adverse situation. Clean tights, socks and cotton gloves are drying on a line. Ally is endeavouring to air off by the heat of the stove the last feel of dampness from the white skull-cap that she has crocheted with fine stitch and cotton to fit Joe's head snugly, hiding his black hair under his white felt-pointed cap.

After our eating is finished, we make ready for the afternoon show. With Joe's assistance my easel, canvas and gear are set up in the stable tent. Their position is by no means a permanent one. The only space available is in the lane between the stalls—up and down that lane all traffic goes to and from the ring. "Look out, the baby's just coming," someone shouts, seizing my easel while I step

hastily aside, nervously watching my study hang, expecting it to pry loose and fall face down in the dirt. The grey bulk of June, the elephant, lopes by, her trunk held forward, upturned, sensitive, gold tassels dangling from her blue velvet cloak, as she avoids stepping on my paint-box which there had been no time to move.

Painting there had to be carried out with the greatest speed, while I was keyed up to the top pitch. A mere glance at my subject was all I got, unless some performer could stay and pose for a few moments between entrances, or I could persuade a groom to bring out a horse and hold it before time to go in. I am never sure that my best work is not done under these difficult circumstances; it raises the fighting spirit—a stupendous effort to concentrate on work and shut out disturbance, ready to jump from danger, alert for opportunity to see and put down something waited for, perhaps for days.

I had no lack of helpers, and I needed them. All were intensely interested in what I was doing. They posed for me whenever possible, and were always on the watch—a regular bodyguard. In time I got to know just what was going to happen by what the band was playing, but without Joe I should have had some close escapes. When eighteen Liberty horses leave the ring at full gallop, excited after the performance, anxious to have their bearing-reins loosened and get back to their stalls, that is the worst moment, as they spread out fanwise on leaving the ring doors. "They're here," Joe would say and we skedaddled. I had a fright once when I stepped back, forgetting to look where I was going, and found myself right up against the quarters of two zebras. I stood frozen with fright, trapped, but had the sense to keep perfectly still till all the horses had passed. The only reason I was not kicked to death was because the zebras were used to having me near them. They were terrors, absolutely wild, they had not long been with the circus; the groom had to put up a board to protect himself when he fed them.



A WINDY NIGHT IN THE PONY TENT
1931-1932



THE THREE CLOWNS

1931-1932

(By kind permission of the City of Leicester Art Gallery)

During the painting of a water-colour called "Three Girl Acrobats" my easel was squeezed against the canvas sides of the ring door entrance, where it narrowed to the width of the curtains; for several evenings the Balagher Girls came a quarter of an hour before their entrance, purposely to pose. No sooner had we started than the Liberty horses assembled, since their act preceded that of the girls. The grooms tried to keep a space clear, but the line of horses generally closed up. Often I was kneeling down and peering under their bellies between a mass of legs at the girls in their black sequined bodices and pink tights, the horses all crowding round to be petted, nodding their reined heads, plumes hitting me in the eye and knocking board and easel over. Wherever I set up the easel I was in the way of something going in and out of the ring. No one ever hinted that I was a nuisance. I ceased to care where my pitch was. I was accepted by owner, groom and performer as an inevitable accompaniment of the show.

Among all the grooms was a wonderful love of the beasts; many of the men were so fond of their charges that they would not leave the stable even on their half-day holidays. Horses and other animals that came quite wild to our circus turned into pets under the good treatment. If a groom was even suspected of losing patience with an animal he was dismissed at a moment's notice. New grooms coming from famous racing-stables would tell me that they had never seen horses so luxuriously looked after. One English groom, whenever he had time, plaited the straw behind the Shetlands, in long regular strands of gold laid over the deep green of the grass. "Dust the grass, the Boss is coming," I would hear a groom say when Captain Mills was expected.

The grooms, interested in my painting, never grudged hours spent in holding any horse between shows while I did studies in pencil, line and wash or oil paint, not caring for the result so much as what was being learnt of construction. I modelled details of joint, hoof, ear, eye, or nostril, and even drew the turn of every hair. I was determined to

know all about a horse, to be able to paint it well, and have facility in expressing whatever action I wanted.

During the first year at Margate, where we remained on the same pitch for five weeks, Ally would come to the "back" a few minutes before the afternoon show was over. "Pack up, it's time you finished," and we both carried all the traps to the lean-to refreshment-tent at the entrance of the show where she had been put in charge; not my first visit there, for during the interval rush, as change from my own work, I had been helping scoop the hard ice-cream out of the pail and yank the tin curly-edged tops off the lemonade bottles with an iron key that always lost itself when most wanted. I gave up serving after the first week. I could not count up in a second how much seven threepence-ha'pennies come to and give the change back out of two half-crowns. "Hurry up, miss; the show's starting again and I have been kept waiting ages," someone would shout. "Here, you haven't given me the right change. What do you take me for?" In my desperation I generally gave more change than I should—the pleasure of serving was not enough to make up what I paid out of my own pocket. Ally tells a tale of watching me one day serving with a cigarette in my mouth which I had forgotten to take out. The ices were all put ready and cost fourpence each. One man said to me, "Here, miss, five ices," and tendered half a crown. I took the money and looking at the man said, "How much will that be?" Then Ally sang out, "They're fourpence each." I looked at the man again saying, "That will be quite all right," doing the poor man out of tenpence. He went away like a lamb, probably thinking, "Those circus thieves."

When the afternoon work was over Ally's kettle was boiling. I washed the paint off my hands in the bucket where all the glasses had been cleaned, and Ally and I cut slab after slab of bread and butter, spreading each slice with potted meat or jam. Sometimes we had eggs, for we were again hungry; then an ice-cream if there was plenty left in the tub. I learnt the art of washing up tea-things in a saucer of water

with a screwed-up paper bag. It was a long way to the tap.

We cleared our tea-things from the end of the counter and swabbed the crumbs off the white oilcloth. Then Ally in her forceful way, shaking her fair curls sideways, would say, "Come, Laura, it's time you had a rest!" Out came an old mackintosh which was thrown down at the back of the crockery hampers. On the waterproof Joe's old comedy evening-suit was next laid out and doubled up for a pillow and Ally's old brown coat spread on top of all. These garments formed a magnificent couch. A freshness blew through the space where the wallings were just too short to touch the ground; the tufted emerald of the grass underneath grew rank, untrodden by the passing feet outside that I watched through the transparency of the blades, till, like a healthy child, I fell asleep.

A mere moment passes before Ally wakes me. "Get up, get up; show starts in ten minutes—didn't you hear the band?—well, you're a one—they have been playing for a quarter of an hour right overhead—do you mean you never heard them? Well, that's a scream. Hurry up, Joe's waiting to take your things round; he's not out on his stilts to-night, there's too much wind!"

"Last act's on—finish! Let's get out before the crowd starts moving," Ally's voice sounds in my ear towards the close of the evening show, waking me to ordinary life from my complete absorption in work. The spare canvas is retrieved, pegged and strapped as protection to the one worked on. There are two or three water-colours to be taken down off the tent-poles where they had been pinned for safety. Palettes are cleaned. "Don't forget your brushes: I'll take them home to wash," says Ally. Round to the black dressing-wagon we go, and in answer to shouts of "Joe," the Willesden sheet is parted, through a slit Joe's bare arm comes, hand extended, to take my gear and pack it away for the night behind his boxes. The arm comes out once more to hand soap, towel and a large-sized, round Mackintosh's

toffee-tin we used as a wash-basin, its inside covered with a film of white that Joe had just washed off his face.

Soon after I joined the show I was carrying the tin to fill from the tap. A big figure appeared out of the darkness shouting, "So it's you that stole my frying-pan!" Even when I showed this man the clean bottom of our toffee-tin to prove it had never been used over a fire, he would not be convinced. By that time quite a crowd of half-dressed figures had gathered to tell him I was no thief. He was still suspicious as he told his tale: "I had three rashers of bacon and a couple of eggs all cooked and hot for my breakfast this morning. I turned my back for a moment, and when I looked round it was gone. I didn't mind about losing me breakfast so much, it was the frying-pan! I can't cook on me shovel, it's cracked—and that tin she's got looks just like mine. . . ." My accuser was one of the tractor engineers. His face and hands were like a nigger's; you could only make out his shape in the night by the shine of his flesh, the whites of his eyes and teeth.

In some sheltered corner Ally has hidden the stove, alight some time, heating the water for our supper-tea. When all the other men have dressed and cleared out of the same old wagon, the stove is smuggled in and the kettle soon a-boil. More bread and butter comes out of its wrapping in Ally's bag, that holds more than any bag before; cheese as well is inside, and perhaps some sliced ham. Our forks are not of sterling quality; I break two in halves under ordinary pressure, until I learn that they must be handled gently. "There you go again," Ally said—"another threepence gone west—you don't know how to handle good silver!"

Through the open end of the wagon we see, close outside, the sagging wallings and taut canvas of the big top, the lines of the guys and stakes. The strings of coloured electric bulbs which trim the tent, and the big front signs are soon extinguished, our candle the only illumination, but for the glow from the stove kept on for warmth. If we bend down and look sideways through the opening, we see stars hanging

in the depths above our roof. Now and then silence that has gradually fallen is broken by clinking of a chain as some horse moves, or rustle of straw and thud as a lion turns in his sleep.

Carried in imagination to India, Burma, China, I ride wild elephants, I sit with Rajahs and their retinue, while thieves sneak under the seating to cut both toe and ring from some wife's naked foot. First Ally, then Joe, take up the tale of their years in the East with circuses, Joe startling me to attention in this way: "It was hard having to put the poor chap's tights on and go up in his place that night!" Or, "She was not really circus at all—a gor' blimey little woman—a Cockney—she had so many diamond rings on her fingers they were too stiff to bend. Her husband worked tigers, but he was afraid of her. I once saw a full-grown Sumatra tiger attack him and he killed it with one blow of his fist."

Ally's tales are rounded, feminine, as she tells of India and her fright at imaginary footsteps when alone at night she had to pass through a forest full of apes.

My hard day's work is over, a new picture finished. What might not still be done in such an atmosphere? Weary after a day's standing, content on a hard box I sit to listen, as words pour out telling of hot suns, sand-storms, and typhoons, guitar-cases filled with gold, breakdowns and tragedy of accident and illness, blood in China, love, intrigue—and the young native, such a promising acrobat, last seen on the other side of the gate, a helpless hulk of leprosy. My Arabian nights, I call them.

"Here, we've got to have some sleep," suddenly interrupts Ally. "Come along, you two; you'd stop talking here all night." So I would. . . .

Through the deserted streets Ally and Joe accompany me for the mile or two to my lodgings. I try to persuade them to go straight to their own. They take no notice. They will not leave me till the key is turned in my door.

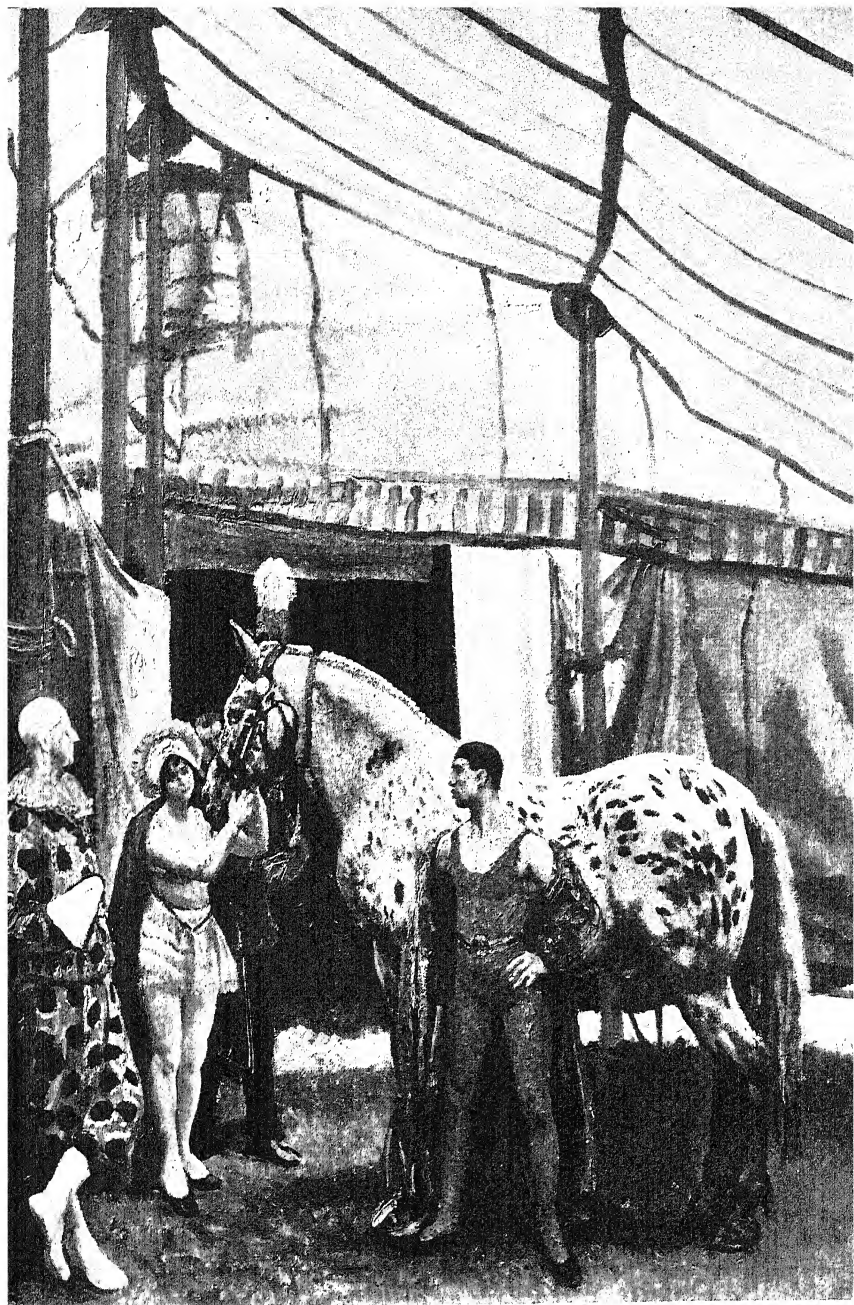
Crossing one field we stop to watch the criss-cross of

searchlights waving from several quarters trying to find some aeroplane as it endeavoured to sneak through unobserved. During our time at Margate these celestial manœuvres took place nearly every night. "There she goes," Ally would exclaim, her quick eye finding the silver spot in some tapering beam, suddenly stationary.

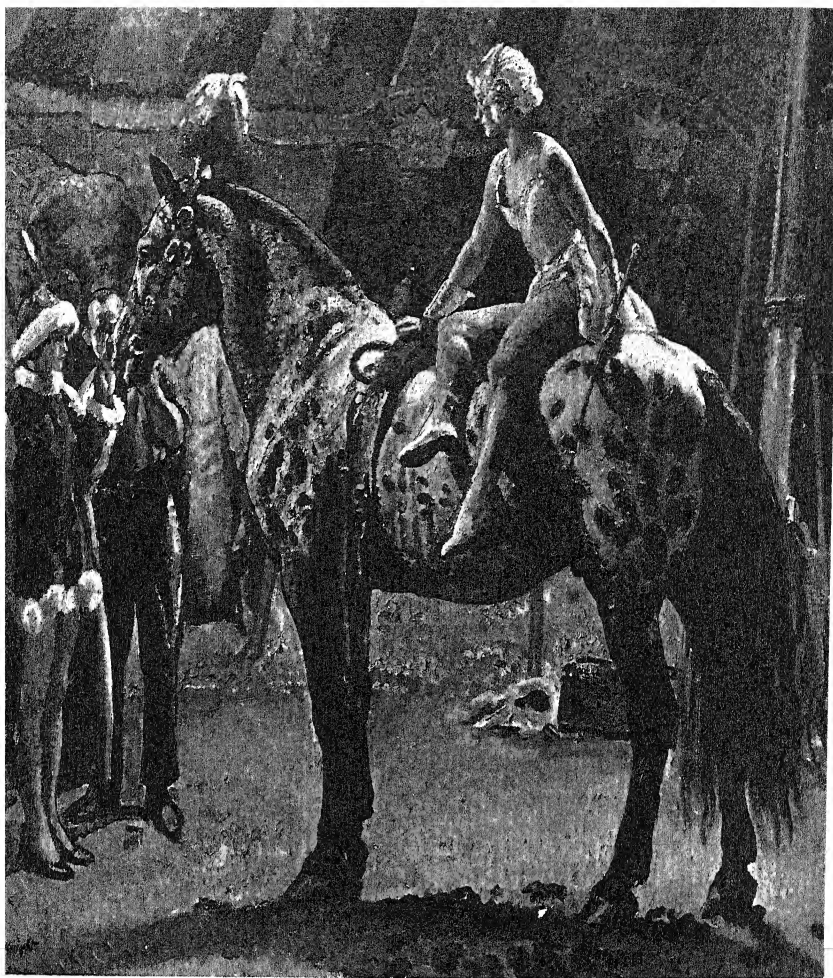
Before leaving Margate the difficulty of painting in the diffused light under canvas had been overcome. I threw away any idea of attempting subtleties of paint or composition. The confusion, the constant change and noise made serious thought an impossibility—knowledge of the subject and an almost subconscious method of saying what I had to say seemed the only hope of producing anything. I just took a canvas from my pile and painted anything that interested me, without preliminary sketch or drawing. I had a real sensation of painting power that season, when neither fatigue nor obstacles existed. I grudged the hours wasted in sleep, which was deep after days under canvas. Canvas never shuts out the freshness of out of doors as brick and stone do, but is more like a film made by Nature herself to protect her people—air to breathe comes through the cloth; it contracts in a shower like some live thing straining at its ropes. A gentle servant, itself needing service of slackened or tightened guys to lighten strain or broaden the spread.

One night I was painting the water-colour "On the High Trapeze and Ladder," with my drawing laid out on the refreshment-counter right at the back of the audience. I had to make the lines very strong, there was little light. Suddenly my back felt cold. Turning, I found I was out in the night—the wallings behind had disappeared. The big top, capable of seating five thousand people and containing the life of the circus, was disintegrating while the Saturday night performance was still in progress. In a few hours it would be mere bundles of canvas, lengths of plank-ing and poles, stacked on trolleys.

"Even though we are used to it, we too always get a queer



WAITING TO GO IN
1931-1932



ELSIE ON HASSAN

1932

(By kind permission of Nottingham Castle Art Gallery)

feeling when everything comes down on pulling-out night," a performer told me.

"Stay and see the pulling down of the show, it is a great sight," young Cyril Mills advised.

When Ally and Joe had packed dresses and props, and found a safe place in the wagon for some of my painting things, the stable tent was down, and the Liberties, high-school horses and menagerie had already gone to the station. I was just in time to see the Shetlands and the zebras run off into the night, the black patches and markings in their coats lost. In the ring of dressing- and living-wagons light shone and figures darted, packing apparatus, carrying hampers and boxes. Through a door, opened for a moment, the half-dressed figure of René Bento's lovely wife was seen, her coal-black hair hanging over her face as she struggled to find room for what she and René wore in the ring. Sequins shone in the open trunk which overflowed in billows of white net.

The arc-lights pick out certain details, leaving the rest hidden in shadow. Activity out of sight makes itself known by tremendous banging. A mass of canvas hangs in ponderous folds. Engine-tractors run. Sweating faces and bare arms are seen in the midst of match-sticks of poles and upended boarding, shouts and heated arguments come from all quarters. Overhead stars come and go through the smoke. It is cold—nearly two o'clock. "Home to bed; you've got your packing there to finish." "We'll go home with you, Laura, Joe will rope up your canvases; you can't pull tight enough."

At the station, before seven o'clock next morning, the Circus Special is in; attached to it are the horse-boxes and sticking out of an old coupé window is a zebra's head. Most of the performers who have no living-wagons are gathered ready on the platform, looking unlike themselves in smart ordinary dress. Ally carries the bag; in it are the left-overs from the last meal and a new loaf of "that nice Margate

bread." The contents include matches, cigarettes, aspirin, sodamint, a bottle or two of medicine and every other trifle we may need that Sunday.

"Get a move on." Ally hustles us out of the train at Folkestone. Everyone else is hurrying, all anxious to get the first pick of the lodgings—"Letari" we call them. Spreading into noisy groups we rush up and down the various streets to look for "Apartments to Let." We knock at many doors. Half-dressed, dishevelled people come in answer to look at us with sleepy eyes. We violate the privacy of house after house, some dirty and cheap and others clean and too expensive. A smell of fried bacon reigns. We find a nice place and arrange to go there. "What are you doing in the town?" the landlady asks at the last moment. "We are with the circus," is our reply. "No, I can't take you," says the woman, closing the door in our faces. Our scrambling search starts afresh. One of the boys runs past us shouting, "No. 6 is all right—might suit you!" We go there. A bedroom for Ally and Joe. A big front room for me, lots of space for canvases. A combined room, "We'll all have our meals together on the round table in the bay." We dump our parcels. Ally hastily arranges with the landlady and off we rush to the tober to see what it is like. "Joe says it's fine. He's been round; it's quite close."

Our pitch at Folkestone was the best we had that season, the grass as smooth as a big flat lawn. Behind, hedge-squared fields stretched up to distant lines of hill. When we arrived wreaths of fog lay to block meadow and trunk of tree, leaving the top sharp and clear; ghost trees and hedges that appeared and vanished while the sky graduated in infinite delicacy of rainbow range from warmth to coolness overhead—promise of a cloudless day. The chill of morning made us button our coats. We were glad of extra mackintoshes to spread underneath us as we lay half asleep on the big square blocks made by the rolled-up quarters. As with hoar frost the green underfoot was dew-greied and

everything was lightly wet. An unforgettable Sunday morning, so fair and fresh.

The entrance was already up, gaudy and lonely in that expanse of country. A circle of earth showed where the ring had been measured out, newly dug and raked for stones. All laid on the ground, ready to be raised upright, the rounding poles converged centrally in a big oval. Beyond, loosely inserted guy-stakes formed a still bigger oval. At the far end sledge-hammers went up and down in see-saw swing as two men drove each steel pin home with a clink and clank. I must try! I lift the great tool—I give a mighty swing—I miss the pin and, fortunately, my leg. “No more, thank you; once is enough.”

Simplified by the mist, and looking exaggeratedly large, a line of men progresses slowly across the field, bearing on their shoulders one half of a steel king-pole weighing half a ton. It is lowered gingerly. One man’s hand is trapped on turning it round in place. There is delay while two fingers are bandaged. The other half king-pole is fetched, and the two pieces fitted together into one whole. It describes all degrees of an angle as it finds the upright position, by the help of timber, ropes and pulleys. The second pole goes up. The first, staunchly embedded, is used as a support until both are fixed in place.

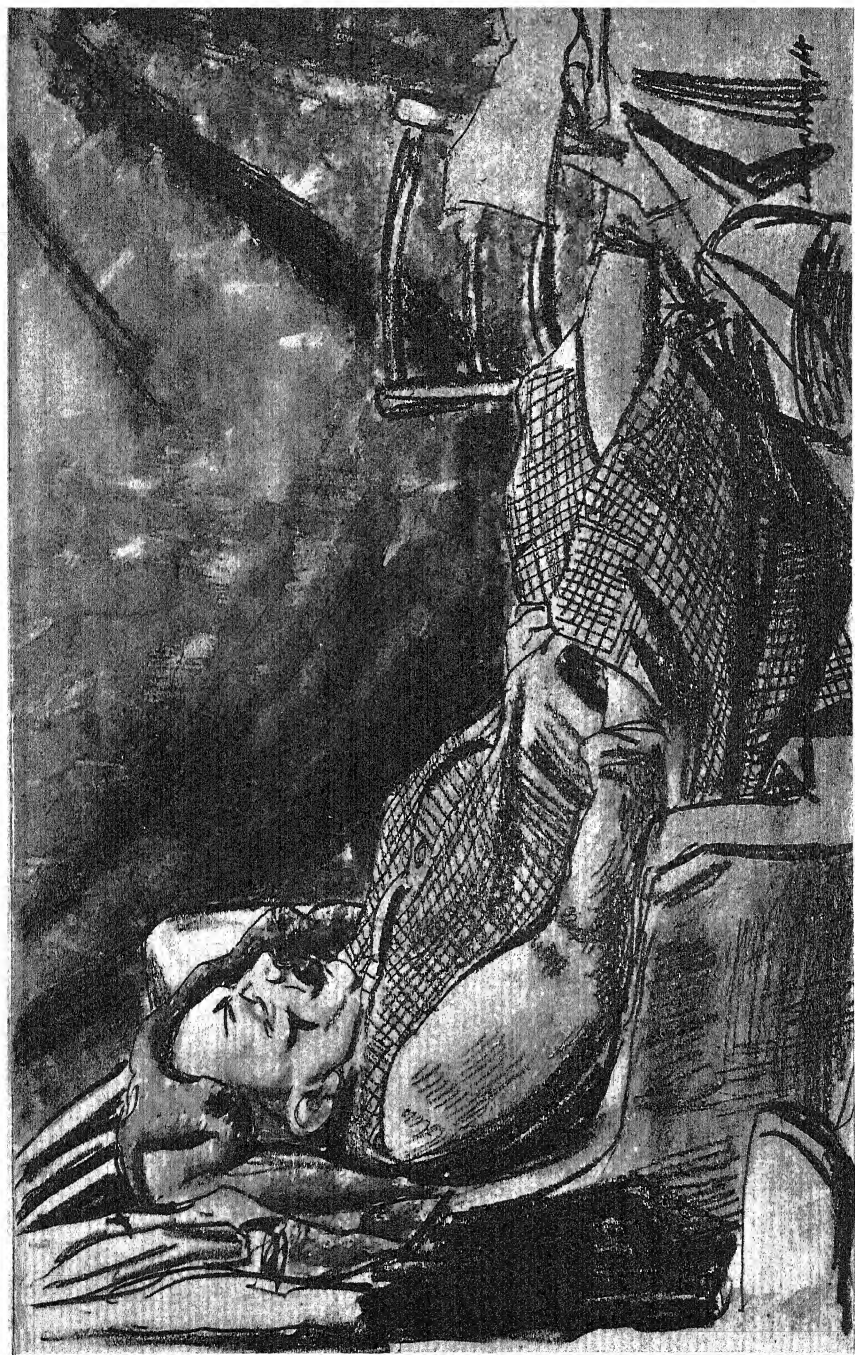
We must leave our hard couch, the quarters are to be spread on the ground. I try to lace a centre-piece, but my fingers are useless on that hard, wet rope. The big top has been up and down in several places, the canvas has lost its fresh brilliance. As we watch the pieces laced together Joe says, “Tent hands are careless nowadays. They ought not to walk on the canvas in their muddy boots; all those marks’ll show when the tent’s up. It would never have been allowed in the old days.” Already many footmarks showed on the transparency of our roof, running up the side of every lacing. Often I had looked up at our golden dome from inside and wondered how those walks on instability up to nowhere had been made.

The shelter of the entrance has become a picnic restaurant. Each little clique has spread its cloth in a comfortable corner. From one comes laughter and a chatter of German and French and Spanish, as Mr. and Mrs. Koniati share sausages, salad and red wine with the Bentos. In another corner Nonsen and his wife speak Russian. Shouts in English come from outside. But all understand the circus tongue, a mixture of these languages and Italian, Hindustani and Romany.

We go out just in time to see Mary, the elephant, arrive. Mary is an experienced traveller. For years she had vanished nightly from the stage at Carmo's command—when Carmo is not circus, he is an illusionist. I watch Mary step down the planking from her van, testing the firmness with each foot. Then out comes Tiny, the black Shetland. Mary stays to feel her friend all over with her trunk, making sure that he has suffered no harm before she will allow Carl, the elephant man, to lead her away. These two animals travel together. Tiny is always staked closed to where Mary is chained in the stables. The pony is so small and the elephant so big that he can stand under Mary's belly without touching. Tiny is a little savage with wild eyes and coarse, rough mane standing on end—a real tough guy. He will not be petted like the others. "You've got to look out he does not nip you if he gets half a chance." Tiny's life will not be so long as Mary's, and all wonder what will happen when he dies; Mary will go nowhere without him.

The lions arrive. Half of the wooden covering of the two dens is let down. Straw sticks through the opening, an acrid smell fills the air for yards around. They are a bit late, and George Baker is all of a fluster, sweaty and dirty. The driver fell asleep; something happened; they landed in a ditch. "We had some job getting them on the road again; I thought the lions would get out; I had all the nets ready," George told me, as he handed out my easel and paint-box from the cupboard underneath a den.

I go to the horse-tent with a sketch-book to make careful





MR. AND MRS. CRASTON

1929

study for a dry point called "Zebras." The grass underfoot, yet unburnt by summer heat, makes a verdant carpet. Among the honey-coloured straw, the horses, all groomed and shiny, munch their oats; I hear the crunch of big flat teeth—a soft knock of nose against a wooden box—the gentle rattle of cord drawn over a rough board's edge—sudden clank of chain or pail. A medley of creamy white, black and rich brown-patched spotted rumps and streaming crinkly tails, between the vermilion framework of the stalls, pungent colour in the shadow of translucent canvas. Lions, ponies, elephants alike exultant, revelling in the cosy cleanliness of their own quarters after the long night's transportation and jostle.

CHAPTER XXXIX
WALLINGS BELLY IN AND OUT

ALONG the South Coast from town to town we went. The names of the places I forget. What did it matter whether Hastings or Timbaktu. Our home, our life was the show. What mattered was whether the pitch was dry or muddy.

One day Captain Mills was horrified to find me digging a trench round the refreshment-hut, and he took the spade away; I felt very cross—I was enjoying it thoroughly. However, I found a pick and used that instead. The spot behind the hampers where I liked to have my nap was under water. Often on that first disturbing day, when the tent was pitched afresh, I would do odd jobs—set the folding chairs and spread their velvet covers.

Not everywhere did we find the cleanliness of the Margate or Folkestone lodgings. Sometimes after hours of search we slept in beds that sagged, on mattresses like a sack of stones. We stayed in houses where our crumbs were never swept or the coarse white tablecloth removed. Joe then threatened to tack a bloater underneath the dining-table as a smelly souvenir for the landlady to hunt weeks later.

“Ally, I’ve half a mind to black the soles of my feet and walk across the ceiling,” said Joe.

“How do you do that?” I asked.

“Just a ‘head to head’ stand with Ally and work my legs along upside down,” was the reply.

Once we found rooms so luxurious that I asked Harold, Rae and Ethel Robertson down to spend the week-end.

I showed my canvases; the “Three Clowns,” still wet, Harold considered particularly satisfying. Joe, Randy and Marba had posed for it a few moments at a time between entrances. They would stand till the last possible moment,

calling as they ran off to the ring "Excuse me, I must go—afraid I've got to change after this. I'll pose again to-morrow."

"Three Clowns" was about the fourth canvas I had done when thoroughly at home. It was while painting that picture I stepped back on the zebras' heels.

Harold, Rae and Ethel did not think our lodgings luxurious at all, and Harold was miserable that I should be living uncomfortably, as he thought. Circus-crazy, he said. No one outside could understand my happiness in the life we led. I did not mind discomfort if there was plenty of water for washing, and Ally always bought good food. What was mere luxury compared to the joy of living right in the middle of my subject—the people, the animals I knew! The little furry creature in the menagerie that scratched its bars when I passed because it wanted me to squeeze my hands under the bars and let it sit in the palms, the horse that put out its tongue to be pulled and the one who pawed the ground to ask, "Haven't you got any carrots to-day?" June the elephant straddled as she strained her chains to reach my easel and cowered back to whine like a spoilt child when I tapped her trunk with a small paint brush as "Get back," I yelled. She was only a baby who wanted to play, but I saw her reach a chair once, she just pressed on it with her knee and in a second it was matchwood.

One night June took fright at the noise of an engine behind. She ran amuck—trumpeted and pulled down the walling which she could just reach, but fortunately she was stoutly staked. When she found she could not get free she threw herself down, trying to pull Carl down too and roll on him. Then she got the gripes and Carl was afraid she might die. "Elephants go off like that in a few minutes," he told me. Through all the disturbance I went on painting.

I enjoyed the companionship of workers, held together in the common purpose—the show, lives knitted for a while,

to unravel at the close. To meet again on another show, perhaps in another part of the world, to feel the bond of the closed brotherhood in which a crack has been made to let me through.

I never lost the joy—shared with circus people—in the spread of cloth overhead, on which sometimes the shadow of a bird outside showed, swooping down, for an instant outlined in perfect shape to blur again and disappear.

Hands and performers alike have love for the "Big Top." If danger threatens, a gale or snow in the night, all leave their beds to help. For the time being it is their home and livelihood. They love it for its beauty and deplore the greying whiteness of its curves as the season advances and bronze-coloured footmarks grow plentiful up the lacings. At the edges of the seams a lighter line begins to show through strain of changing weather. Gusts of wind have lifted the weight of cloth overhead in the stable tent, lifted too the poles that danced up and down. "Don't be caught underneath when a pole thuds down; many's the back and limb been broken that way," I was warned.

Some nights rain lies in canvas pocket where tent joins tent, ready to empty itself over us as we run through.

We go to tober smooth and green, to beaten earthen yards surrounded by houses and walls, to gravelly pitches, to swampy fields of muck and mire.

Autumn comes and the time of the equinox.

Sometimes hoar-frost powders the ground with white. In spite of sweaters and leather jackets my fingers are cold and stiff as I hold a brush, and the bare backs and arms of the girl acrobats show goose-flesh as in their thin silk tights they wait behind the curtain.

Rajah the lion has been in a bad mood for days. Madame, Togare's wife, trembles as she hangs on my shoulder while peeping through a slit to see that "nothing happens."

René Bento's wife has spent a whole year making elaborately sequined dresses for both her husband and herself—

they had been waiting for a special opportunity to wear these beautiful things—now is The Occasion—a person of great importance is to be in the house to-night. I hear an excited chatter outside the dripping wallings close to where I am working. The canvas is lifted by René, rubber boots are over his white socks, a black oilskin over his new dress. In his other hand is an umbrella that he holds over the magnificent white ostrich plumes of his wife's head-dress as she is carried on the shoulders of another man. Into the ring they go with mandolin and fiddle, as pretty and fresh as new dolls straight out of cardboard boxes. On the way back to their dressing-wagon, René's india-rubber heels slip on the wet duck-boards out of which a path has been made over the river of mud—right into the ditch he falls—his dress is ruined. They fall into each other's arms to cry like little children. . . .

To-night a gale and sheets of rain hit the tent with shattering sound. The wallings belly in and out with vicious claps while our frail roof lifts up and down and poles careen and thud. Underneath the muddy wallings the clowns crawl in short cut from their dressing-wagon, for each entrée a different dress. Embedded in deep straw the lions lie, the cages screened with extra canvas to keep out the draughts. Rugs cover the strange markings on the ponies' backs, their heads hang.

We are now nearing December, a touch of frost stiffens the tumblers' knees and ankles as they warm up before the Charivari. "Tendons snap easily when it's cold," I overhear. The zest has gone out of the *ponging*. "Don't 'let out' to-night, remember that knee of yours," I hear a tumbler's wife warning.

A successful season comes to a close. The animals go back to the farm, performers who possess wagons accompany them. Others disperse to their homes abroad. Lodgings are hunted in Brixton. Everyone is contented and has a bit put by and "they say Carmo's going to start out again soon after Christmas."

An enormous quantity of work was done that year. I painted the ponies on such a night as I have described, trying to give their sadly patient look and the weight of wind in the wallings. I exhibited it at the R.W.S., where it was bought by Herbert Alexander. "Three Clowns" is now in the Leicester Art Museum. "A Musical Clown," for which René and his wife had posed, is at Preston Art Gallery. Lord Kirkley has another important canvas, the subject Mona Connor, holding Sulieman's head; Herbert in red tights stands in front, Joe in his yellow-spotted clown's dress leans against a tent pole and the stable tent is gilded transparency in a summer afternoon's sun. I could have sold that picture over and over again at the R.A., where it was exhibited. Besides many others painted that season was a water-colour of Mona on Sulieman with Hans at his head; Lady Eleanor Smith now has that picture.

Lady Eleanor constantly visited our show that year. Strangely, we never met then; she went to the front of the house and I to the back. As I worked, the clowns would come round and tell me, "Lady Eleanor's in the house this afternoon with Mr. Martin." "What is she like?" I asked, curious about someone I had not seen. "Handsome—black curly hair and no hat, looks a good sort," they replied. Lady Eleanor was writing her book *Red Wagon* at the time.

CHAPTER XL
"THE LIONS ARE LOOSE!"

MILLS and Carmo parted company after that season. I threw in my lot with Carmo's show to be with Ally and Joe and the performers and animals I knew. I planned to join them again later.

Rumour had foundation—Carmo did start on the road again with a winter show. A super-strong tent was bought, of heavy cloth, low pitched, the better to withstand the weather, and hundreds of pounds were spent on a heating system. The front of the show was magnificently made of an old gilded fair front with all the carved figures playing instruments. Fresh artistes were engaged, among whom was the Carolli family, bare-back riders. One of the boys was brilliant—he could throw a somersault from the back of one cantering horse to another. It was going to be the best show that had ever been put on the road—in winter too, when there was no competition. People would flock to see it.

People did not flock to see it—nor did they believe in the heating system. Day after day, week after week, nearly empty houses were played to.

Letters from Ally told of quagmire-like fields, inches deep in water. Each pay-day they all expected to be put on half salary. Carmo, in his high-handed way, made no reduction; he had said he wanted to keep the artistes in work all through the winter; though not true circus, he had something of the spirit of the old-time owners whose workers were their children. Thousands and thousands of pounds were poured out of the coffers of the concern as it worked its way through town and village till they reached Birmingham. Ally wrote: "Playing to capacity—a queue waiting before

every show." But then without warning came a ghastly telegram: "Big top fell down this morning with weight of snow."

Pictures of the disaster filled every paper. I remember one of Togare standing among the ruins that were just broken sticks and torn strips of cloth mixed up with trampled snow. A performer who saw the tent go told me: "Snow started to fall when the public was entering the evening before. Most of us stayed up that night. We all thought the tent-master would let the bell tops down, so that the snow could pour into the ring—we'd only have lost the *matinée*, but the tent-master thought it would hold. A lot of us were standing at the entrance at about nine o'clock in the morning when there was a noise like a pistol-shot as one of the quarter poles snapped. Then, as a boy would drag a stick along a lot of palings, all the poles went one after the other and down went the tent."

More letters came telling of an undaunted Carmo. Another tent was ordered that very morning of the accident. Three or four days later, and there were no traces of the disaster except an enormous heap of tattered canvas in the corner of the ground. The new tent was up, "much handsomer than the other—a real beauty, you'll be wild to paint it!" Ally wrote.

The papers making so much of the break-up had given the circus a wonderful advertisement. Chairs were bought and hired from anywhere to augment the seating and hundreds of people were being turned away at every performance. Money was pouring in. The loss had almost proved worth while.

For three days everyone revelled in glorious expectations. On the fourth morning the Carolli's were practising with their white stallion in the ring. Most of the other performers were then going through the morning practice, when close by the ring entrance a lick of flame showed running up the wallings. . . .

"Loose the horses!" Joe yelled as he raced for the stables

—the grooms wouldn’t move at first—said the breeze was blowing the other way. The ponies were all chained German-fashion—it would have been quicker had they been tied—so easy to slash, but they got them all out just in time and turned them loose in the streets—they were running all over Birmingham. If Captain Ankner hadn’t had that bricked-up gate, there at the back, opened the very day before—all would have been burnt alive!—a high wall was close up round the Show—they’d never have got out! Some fool cut the guy-ropes of a king-pole and down came the flaming canvas right on to the den where all the lions were—“Where’s Togare?”—Togare was on his knees praying in the grounds, his hands clasped above his head. “The lions are loose!” someone shouted, and a panic started outside—firemen dropped their hose—the crowd stampeded. . . . The roaring of both flames and lions was fearful—the roof of the den they were in was alight. Togare had to knock down two men who tried to stop him from opening the cage doors and swinging himself in among the beasts, all crazy with fright—several scorched, and as men hosed the den, he raised the shutter door leading to the other empty one alongside, through it drove the animals to safety. There he stayed for hours—the creatures raging round him, till they quietened, and as they paced past him, he patted on their sores ointment from a box, passed through the bars. He got a medal and was highly honoured for that brave act.

Carl, asleep as usual on his truckle bed behind his charges, had to be shaken, and wouldn’t believe about the fire—had to go and see for himself, but before he could get back to his elephants again—all was alight above—someone else had to unchain them, and Mary was charging up and down outside through the smouldering straw—then she made for a wall which separated the tober from a school—Ally saw her coming and, knowing elephants, jumped over the wall—and hung on by her hands, shouting as she went to a new tent-hand, “Quit—for your life—Mary will get you!” He wasn’t quite quick enough, but managed to get into a corner

that held fortunately, but Mary broke three of his ribs and cracked his head when she butted him—she turned then, and beat her way through the cinders right out into the road where the schoolchildren had gathered, scattering them in all directions amid a hubbub of screams.

Captain Ankner was in the town—poor Mrs. Ankner on the roof of the wagon they were so proud of, swabbing out pieces of lighted canvas that kept falling—someone had to help her, or she'd never have saved their home—Joe had to leave the zebra that had gone back into the tent to look for its fellow—Hans was there! Hans would get him out! But before Hans could drive the beast through, the burning cloth was dropping—Hans must run—or he too would lose his life. . . .

It was awful when that pretty show was down—just a ruin—scraps burning themselves out, and there—running round the ring—just as if performing, was the Carolli's stallion, without a hair singed on his creamy white back. Where the stable tent had been was the zebra—standing piteous, the rugs on his back all ablaze—a look in his eyes that no one could forget till they died—everyone on the grounds who saw him cried—they just couldn't help it. . . .

Once again the telephone to London was used. Another tent was ordered on credit—the last not paid for, and the insurance had run out only a day or two before. Prospects had been so rosy, but bills for fodder, straw and other details had accumulated. Good fortune did not come with the latest new tent; the show was labelled “the one that had the fire.”

I joined up when they reached Hanley. I remember an agonising scene in Carmo's wagon. People gathered there who knew nothing of circus discussing his affairs, while the proud man, silent, showed only by his uneasy movement the pain he was suffering as he sat on his sumptuously upholstered seat.

Salaries and wages were in arrears. From many quarters

further credit was refused. Even chocolate, cigarettes, ice-cream and mineral waters were not obtainable for the refreshment-counter.

Groups of people would be gathered together: “Why isn’t this done?” “We won’t stand it any longer,” I would overhear. There was waste in the stables, oats lay scattered on the ground—general recklessness everywhere.

The tent grew blacker and blacker with the smoke of Hanley that made a pall through which the sun could not pierce—a mere scattering of poor people in the cheapest seats—all to play to at each performance.

In the midst of misery I painted a picture called “The Rosin-backs.” It was bought later by Stoke-on-Trent Art Gallery. A “rosin-back” is a horse used for bare-back riding. Resin is sprinkled on its quarters to prevent the equestrian’s feet from slipping. On the great broad-backed fellows you will see a yellowish tint on the quarters. For that picture Elsie and Addy Scott posed on their grey and chestnut, and Joe Bert for the clown in the red dress; it is very like them all.

But for Joe those girls and their brother Arthur who clowned for them might never have been born. Joe had joined a circus in Ireland as a boy of nine years old. One night that very season the train of wagons was on its way through a mountain-pass—one side a hill, a precipice the other. Mr. Scott, the father, then a baby, was asleep in a wagon in front of the one where Joe sat by the driver. Noticing the erratic movements of the horse of the wagon in front, Joe jumped down, and seized the horse’s head just in time before the wagon-wheels went over the edge. The driver had fallen asleep.

I was painting my rosin-backs when one of the unknown who were forcing themselves on Carmo came up behind to watch me work, and said, “The painting is very good, but who drew it in for you?” “A clown,” I answered.

Another time I was painting Captain Ankner, and a horse he was making walk on its hind legs in the ring—it was

during the hours when the public passed through to see the menagerie. A stranger stood behind me, and after watching a while said, "I see you are taking a leaf out of Laura Knight's book. Do you know her?"

"Yes," I replied. An attendant dusting the seats near by burst into laughter.

CHAPTER XLI
"THE SHOW IS ON"

I DO not know how the show temporarily weathered the storm of difficulties. It was still early in the season when we found ourselves on a ground at South Shore, Blackpool. The winter tent that had been ripped when it came down in the snow disaster, was again pitched, but it had been mended, and light patches on the darker canvas showed where it had been torn. Behind, the newer tent was used as stabling, a gay circle of alternate green and white stripes supported by blue poles. An enormous studio in which to do any size of picture. The two long lines of horses' stalls, even Mary and June at the end, looked insignificant in the vastness.

Ally, Joe and I found lodgings close by in what is called a Company House, where people from the mills and factories in Manchester and Staffordshire go. Pennies from the weekly wages were spared for the holiday club. "First we pay our landlady for the whole time, so we can't spend too much at the 'Fun Fair.' Then we're not stranded—we've got our return tickets," they told me.

Our "company 'ouse" was comfortable and clean. Hot and cold water and basins were in each bedroom and—a bathroom. In the big living-room each family ate at different tables.

I should have loved to paint the characters that came and went; an elderly woman who ironed silk underwear to keep her family: "The doctor says the gas will kill me—with my chest—what's the use of 'im sayin' that?"

Usually feet were the first subject of conversation. At midday dinner I would hear voices from various tables: "Them roads that 'ot, I 'ardly knew 'ow to crawl 'ome from t'beach, my feet's that bad."

A married pair came; you could tell they were "well to do" by the way the husband tucked his thumbs into the arm-holes of his waistcoat as they sat at their table after supper. What the work was that had cramped the man's back into a hunch, bowed his wasted legs and greyed the moist skin of his face I never knew. His whitening mousy hair grew at the back in an immensely long lock which he plastered down and round to cover the baldness of the rest of his head; it ended in a handsome slick curl over his forehead.

This man's wife was his pride. His eyes never left her: a buxom creature in fine clothes; a gold chain and a brooch to pin her lace collar.

While Ally protested "It's time you went to bed after the long day's work," I stayed one night entranced to listen to this woman.

"She came one afternoon and says, 'Me and George is going to Belgium on a trip.' 'What do you want to go to Belgium for?' I asks. 'To see where young George is buried of course. Why not you and Tom come too?' 'Me and Tom go—what do we want to go to Belgium for?' Well, when Tom comes in from t'works I tells him. Well, we sits an' he says, 'Why not? It 'ud be a change—we never seen anything foreign.' Well, we starts off—we was ever ser glad we went. It was grand. Oh! 'Ill 60, an', oh! the souvenirs, oh! they was grand . . ."

I always tried to wait for the return of the daughter of the house, who served in a restaurant. She would stand half-way up the stairs, a bonny lass, entertaining us at the table below. "An owd man coom in t'day—'e warn't 'alf a one—we was all i' fits—'im dressed oop like a dog's dinner 'e was, the owd thing—wantin' to get off with us gals. Come off it, owd flannel feet, I says . . ."

It was difficult to undress and dress in my small bedroom, after it became stacked with canvases wet and dry, and rolls of charcoal and wash drawings that there was not room to pin on the walls. I worked morning, noon and night.

Good luck came to our circus in Blackpool, where it played to packed houses. Word had gone round that it was a wonderful show. Though the debts were still unpaid, everyone was hopeful.

I was content to go on in my stable studio for ever, absorbed in my own work and interested in technique of acrobat or equestrian, or the training of a new horse for the “tub act.” One of the skewbalds, Castor, had died of pneumonia, having caught a chill on the train one stormy day. A vet specialist came from London to see the poor beast inside walls of Willesden, put up to screen the draughts. He lay down at last—I was working close—the end came—a kick or two—a hind hoof protruded. “Look, they know,” someone said as the lions waked up and rushed to one end of their dens, staring in the direction of death with hateful, greedy eyes.

One night just after the lions had been given their titbits of meat, at the end of their performance, back in their cages in the stable tent, a commotion started. George Baker raced for Togare, who came from his bath, dripping wet, his torso bare but for a dressing-gown flung over his shoulders. Down came the fastening bar with a clank as he swung himself into the den where Paris lay in agony clawing his face to pieces in the effort to get a large piece of bone off a lower canine where it had jammed.

Failing to prise the bone off with two iron bars, Togare drops them and with his bare hands pulls the jaws apart and tries to dislodge it with his fingers. He fails and again makes use of the bars. Perhaps he traps a lip? I had heard of fire lit in a beast’s eyes—it is green and bright as an electric bulb. I see the round ears flatten back to the head as the beast crouches to spring. With infinite slowness and caution Togare draws himself back and up to his full height.

Picture heavy folds of Willesden above—the red outer woodwork of the den, the close-set black bars, a big shadow cast diagonally across the pale bluish green of the back of the cage against which a magnificently elemental figure of a man

stands—still as any rock, legs apart, clad in loose Turkish trousers, muscled chest shining, wet like the black curls that drip on his head. Over the broad shoulders hangs his orange-scarlet dressing-gown—on the face a smile—his eyes never leave those of the lion—the lion's never leave his—the tenseness of a body crouched to spring—pain—rage—violence of a man-eater. Silence—recognition—adoration—eyes in which the flame dies—great ears coming forward into place.

On the ropes round, several grooms and I hang helpless and terrified lest a sound or movement may precipitate tragedy. Time is suspended. Again Togare stoops to pick up the crowbars—again he tries—again he fails. Again he wrenches the great jaws apart with his hands and this time succeeds in dislodging the bone. He kicks it through the space at the bottom of the bars and lets himself out.

"I never want to see that again," says a groom as he rushes out to be sick in the grounds.

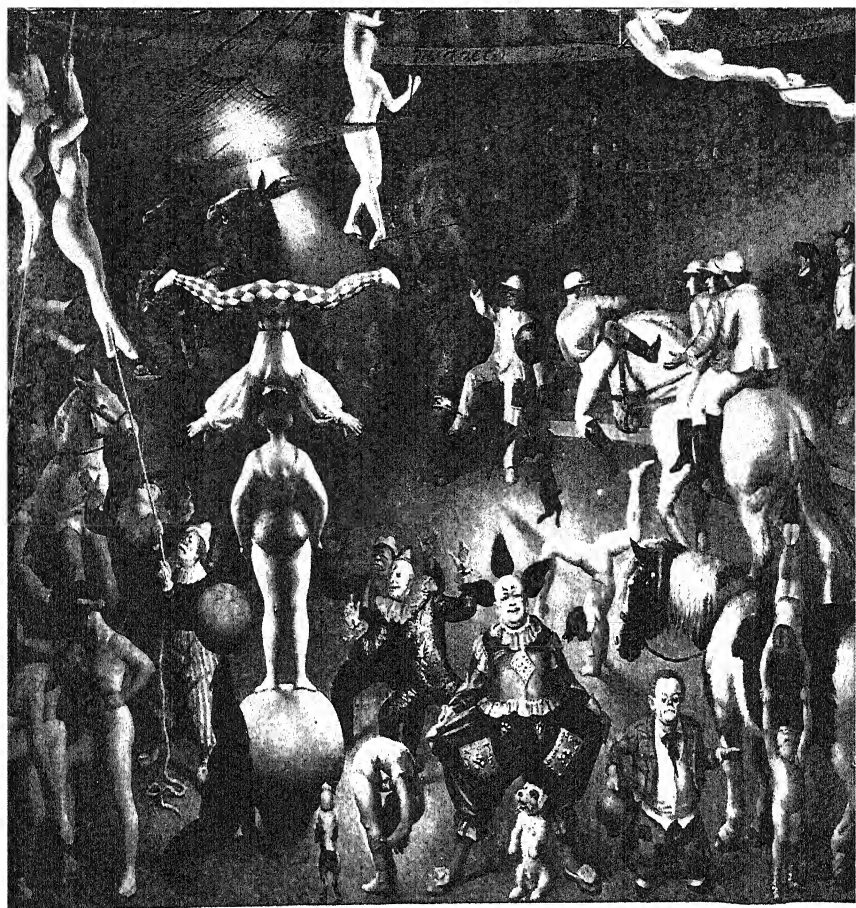
Togare, with seraphic, attractive smile stoops underneath the dens to pick up the piece of bone and measures the hole with a straw—it is two inches deep.

"He would not have done it if I had been here—madness!" exclaimed Carmo, who appeared when all was over.

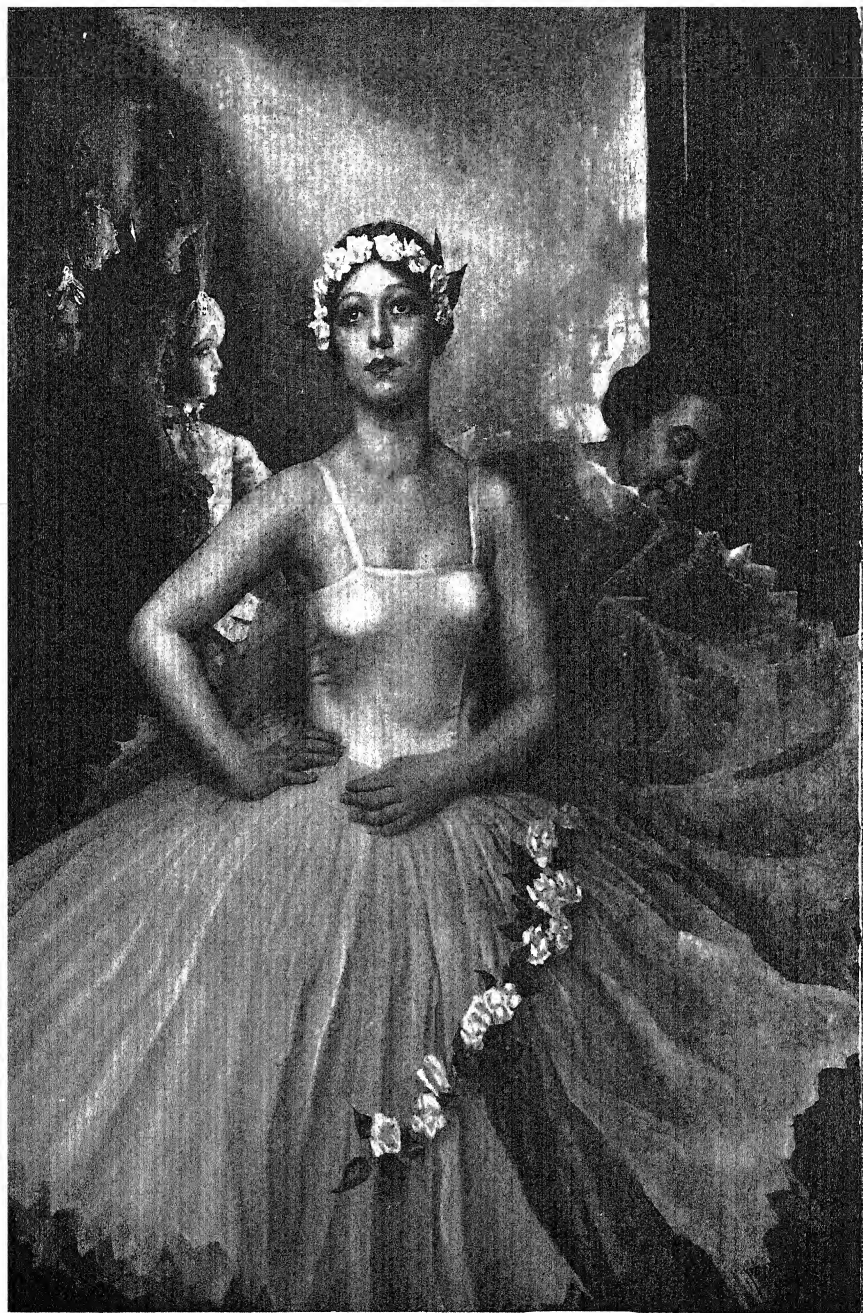
I ate no supper that night—my inside was filled with lead. The bone, and the tale, I sent to Major Atherley next day; he loved to hear such things.

Though intensely absorbed in my own work, it was impossible for me to be one of the inhabitants of our little city without feeling interest in all that took place around—individual performance, its merits, the gossip of stable and dressing-wagon.

A dressing-wagon, which I painted one evening when the girls were actually changing, I gave as my diploma work to the R.W.S. A *mêlée* of a dozen girls dressed and half-dressed, costumes, make-up trays, plumed hats, band-boxes, high-heeled shoes, all crammed in a space no bigger than a



CHARIVARI
1927



MOTLEY
1926

large cupboard. Among them was the girl who picked up and examined any newly acquired treasure from the other's make-up trays to say, “I saw one just like it only much better at Woolworth's yesterday.”

It was impossible not to take an interest in details that sometimes were ridiculous—whether the ice-cream came too soft or a bit short, became important; the rich woman who followed us, hoping for a glance from someone's dark eyes; the handsome foreign groom who left to marry a “well-to-do” woman; how much of the salary arrears was given from the pay-wagon each Saturday night when a dark group of people was gathered round the old converted 'bus that did duty as office. “Business with gloves to-day,” someone would say as Carmo stood at the entrance, his hands covered in smart yellow leather, a sign that put everyone in good spirits. A constant undercurrent of chat ran—we were a village, with all the village gossip.

The sandy streets blazed hot and white at a quarter past two when the band struck up with brazen blast, almost drowning the shuffle and rustle of the incoming public. “This way to the one-in-ten-in-two-in-four seats, please.” “Ice-cream,” “Chocolates,” “Cigarettes.” “After the performance visit the menagerie to see the most wonderful collection of wild and savage beasts gathered from all the known and unknown parts of the globe.” I knew the exact stroke of the clock by the sounds that pierced my consciousness, till the last of the chattering public cleared out and quiet fell on the summer afternoon. The horses munched their hay and oats, the lions drowsed; the elephants, Mary and June, swayed from side to side, great looming hulks, grey, dark with a mauvish cast against the warm brilliance of the low sun, which glowed through the pink and white wallings of the stable tent, a roseate background across which shadows of a guy rope, tree-trunk, blurred leafy branch, chimney-pot, or a square of a wagon lay in cooler patch against the warmth. The top surfaces on the horses' coats were lemon-tinted, their dark markings deep and

intense, the red-painted iron of the stalls glazed with yellow. In sheltered spots the grass grew in long, bright emerald patches; the grass underneath the seating too was lank, but pale—it had seen no daylight for so long. Down the centre, where all the animals passed, the earth was black and trampled; on it the strewn sawdust lay like a pale gold snow.

On such a late afternoon I painted Mary and the Shetlands, a picture which is now at the Newcastle Laing Art Gallery, and an oil of Hassan and the green and white striped tent.

At half-past six the band again bursts into brazen noise and lights have gone up in the house where the heavy canvas is too thick to admit the late sunlight; deep gold rays shine low through the frailer horse-tent.

Only a short while before all was darkness in the ring entrance, the square behind the curtain where performers assemble. Now electric bulbs light up the yellow and red stripes of the canvas sides and the muddied green of the Willesden, the edge spotted with brass eyelet holes. Here the poles are red. A group of girls in satin and spangled *leotards* (tunics) and sparkling head-dresses bring a load of tinselled clubs shaped like bottles, to pile on a cloth spread on the floor. A clown leans on the wooden stairway that leads to the band-stand overhead, and one on a lower step sits holding an enormous parti-coloured ball.

The Hanson boys lift knees, raise arms, bend back and forth and round to limber up for the second act, when one balances a pole on his shoulders for the other to climb and cling to by foot or hand and do his head-stand on top.

Addie Scott is close to the scarlet curtain of the ring doors, ready for the bar act, the bare flesh of her handsome thighs squeezed out as she strides her horse.

The band reaches the music that gives the cue. The horse knows—he springs forward into a gallop as the curtains part, and shouts go up from clowns and ringmaster—"The Show is on!"

CHAPTER XLII
A RAILWAY CARRIAGE

THE four months at Blackpool passed as in a flash. Picture after picture and study after study were completed. I never worked harder or with greater concentration—it was no longer possible to stack the work in my bedroom. A big case to hold my work had to be made; it was kept in the stable tent behind the horses. Sometimes I stood almost ankle deep in mud, and Hans, the Swedish groom, lent me his sabots to wear until Carmo had a wooden platform made for me.

I was all out for study of the horse that year. At home I had anatomical diagrams and books illustrating all the actions. When not actually painting, hours were spent with grooms discussing all points. We passed our hands over each joint or insertion of muscle and tendon, to know by feel what happened underneath. "He step like a lady; watch him," the head groom, a German, often said of Heifer, one of the Liberty horses, a great pet of mine. I painted him a great deal. He and Hassan went first into the ring, harnessed in brass-studded blue-lacquered leather with blue and scarlet plumes. Two greys—two chestnuts—two blacks and so on, all beautifully matched.

I do not know how I kept up that long strain of hard work, standing from early morning and working on one canvas and another until the show was over. Between afternoon and evening show I was in the stables with one of the grooms holding a horse.

Pollux and Apollo, the skewbalds, often posed. Apollo was a terror when he first came. Captain Ankner had bought him in Germany for lions' meat, but had no heart to kill him, he was such a beauty. "Look out you don't get caught

between him and something solid, even a pole, or he'll get you—he's quick as lightning—he killed two men before he came, striking them down with his forefeet—that's why we got him," I was told. Before I left I could go up close to feed him with carrots; he would back in his threatening way no more.

Of almost all our horses I still have numberless studies in colour and black and white, too valuable for my own use for me to part with them.

Ally would not let me work on Sundays. "You've done enough work this week; go on sleeping. I'll bring up your breakfast; I'm going to take Joe's up."

When all three of us at last found ourselves downstairs we went to the beach. At high tide we watched the waves break against the wall. Ally loved the hiss and surge, but whenever possible she liked to get into the green fields and peace of the country.

On one occasion we took a tram, hoping to find peace in the country fields. At our destination we found a fair in progress, and were all three photographed on a life-sized cock. Ally insisted that we should go where the grass was really green. We climbed fences and waded through ditches, but could not get away from pairs of lovers and the noise of the bands. Ally and Joe came home muddy, depressed and tired. As for me, I loved the crowd in all its vulgarity and could have enjoyed it for hours.

Once or twice Ally and Joe took their golf-clubs up to the course for a round or two and I followed them, so tired I could scarcely crawl.

I did some water-colours on South Shore beach, and Joe kept the people away while I worked. I should have liked to paint many things there if not so interested in another direction: the poor people bathing their weary feet with seawater, or sitting shielded with black umbrellas instead of sunshades. The types of holiday-makers on the promenade gave me quite a thrill. That year it was fashionable among the young men to wear tasselled caps half made of one

colour and half the other, a strange and electric touch in a boisterous crowd of youngsters who in rough horseplay barged into the lightly clad girls, some lovely in spite of raw sunburn patches on bare arms and necks. Beach pyjamas came into vogue; yards of gaudy trouser flapped and wide hats flopped back in the breezy streets. Among the adolescents, the bulky black-clothed elders stumped on bowed legs and painful feet, their umbrellas used as walking-sticks. Here and there was a cripple or a hunchback.

I had left Harold in Mousehole when I went to Blackpool. At Plymouth a young naval cadet got into the carriage—he helped me to carry my luggage across a station. This charming boy was also travelling to Blackpool. Half-way there, we got into the London express; three other women were in the carriage.

We spent hours of intimacy with these women, who unburdened their hearts to strangers as possibly they could not have done to their friends.

That carriage might have been a scene from a Tchekov play. The monotonous song of the rolling wheels and the rhythmic pulse diddley-dum, diddley-dee, diddley-dum, diddley-dee, formed orchestral accompaniment. The single light overhead shone on tips of noses and chins where hat-brims cast no shadow.

With no apparent reason except that she must tell someone, a woman who sits alone in a corner starts to talk. Her eyes dart from side to side as they stare into the night rushing past.

"I don't want to go home—I'm frightened. They sent me away for three weeks' rest and said I must go. I shall be back in an hour now and I don't know what I'll find. My husband's mad—looney; the doctors won't lock him up—he knows enough to be sensible when *they* come. They ought to have seen him trying to strangle me the night before I went away. My daughter writes to say he's just the same—he was at her the other night. God, what am I going to find

when I get home? I'm frightened." Looking at her watch: "It isn't an hour now till I'll be back there. . . ."

Her tragedy loosened other tongues. When she left us the atmosphere in our carriage was tense. Any of us could have made confession. The boy and I leant forward to listen as a handsome woman of nearly middle age pointed to her companion, and said "She's eighty, she is."

"I've not turned eighty yet; me birthday's not till January," contradicted the old lady. "I'm not so old as all that."

"We bin oop to Loondon and baak to-day; we went oop by the early train. I took her to see a specialist. She's a rich woman, she is. You ought to see her house and garden—they're grand."

"I've got a nice 'ouse an' garden," the old lady broke in with squeaky voice.

"She's eighty, and t'specialist says there's nowt mooch t'matter, she may live to be a hundred."

"I'm not eighty, but I may live to be a hundred," says the old lady.

"Her husband left her real comfortable; she's had nowt to do for years but to sit with 'er 'ands in 'er lap."

"I'm quite well to do; I'm not short," says the old lady with great pride.

The younger woman tells of her own life.

"I'm quite well to do myself. I can't grumble. I went into t'mills as a kid of seven. I were married young and we'd both saved oop what we could, so we took a pub. We didn't do so bad there; an' then we'd saved oop a bit more, an' we got a mill of our own. Well, cotton was cotton in them days, but now—what's t'use of a mill? It costs you money instead of bringing any in. But I can't grumble; we managed to put a nice bit by—it doesn't matter if we never have to do any work again. What I've always wanted to do is to travel, but my husband he won't travel—he likes his home——"

"I likes my home," interjects the old lady.

The other woman takes up her tale once more.

"I always thowt you'd get a lot out of travel—seeing other countries like—but I can't get Jack to move. 'I'm going off,' I tells 'im. 'Go off and enjoy yourself,' he says, 'but come back.' Well, I went to America last year an' early this year I went to Italy—I enjoyed it like, but you know it wasn't as if Jack was with me an' 'e won't come, he likes 'is 'ome too mooch."

"I likes my 'ome too mooch; I don't want to do no travelin'," interrupts the old lady.

I stayed four months at Blackpool that season, long enough to see the illuminations, and then rejoined Harold in Cornwall. He thought I had deserted him altogether.

The Leicester Galleries held a big show at the Alpine Club of the work I had done during those two years. It was a mistake to show so many pictures of the same character together. There were too many red and blue tent poles, too many spreads of canvas, too many green and white stripes. No one could see a work's individual merit. I realised this when the show was hung. That mass of work represented an achievement of knowledge I am more than thankful to have acquired in those years of sweat and effort. People have often said, "You don't have the strain of study any more. You can paint what you like now." If the strain of study stopped, the artist in me would die; work of necessity costs pain that in itself is delight. To go on, to see in some common thing interest that has never been seen before, to understand, to grasp life with both hands is a joy above all joys.

We had a splendid private view for my exhibition. Ally and Joe were there, Marba the O'Gust I painted so often in his old top-hat and comedy evening kit, and a host of other performers. Herbert Hanson did a hand-stand in front of the pictures for the Press photographers, and I met Lady Eleanor Smith for the first time.

From that exhibition Nottingham Castle Art Gallery

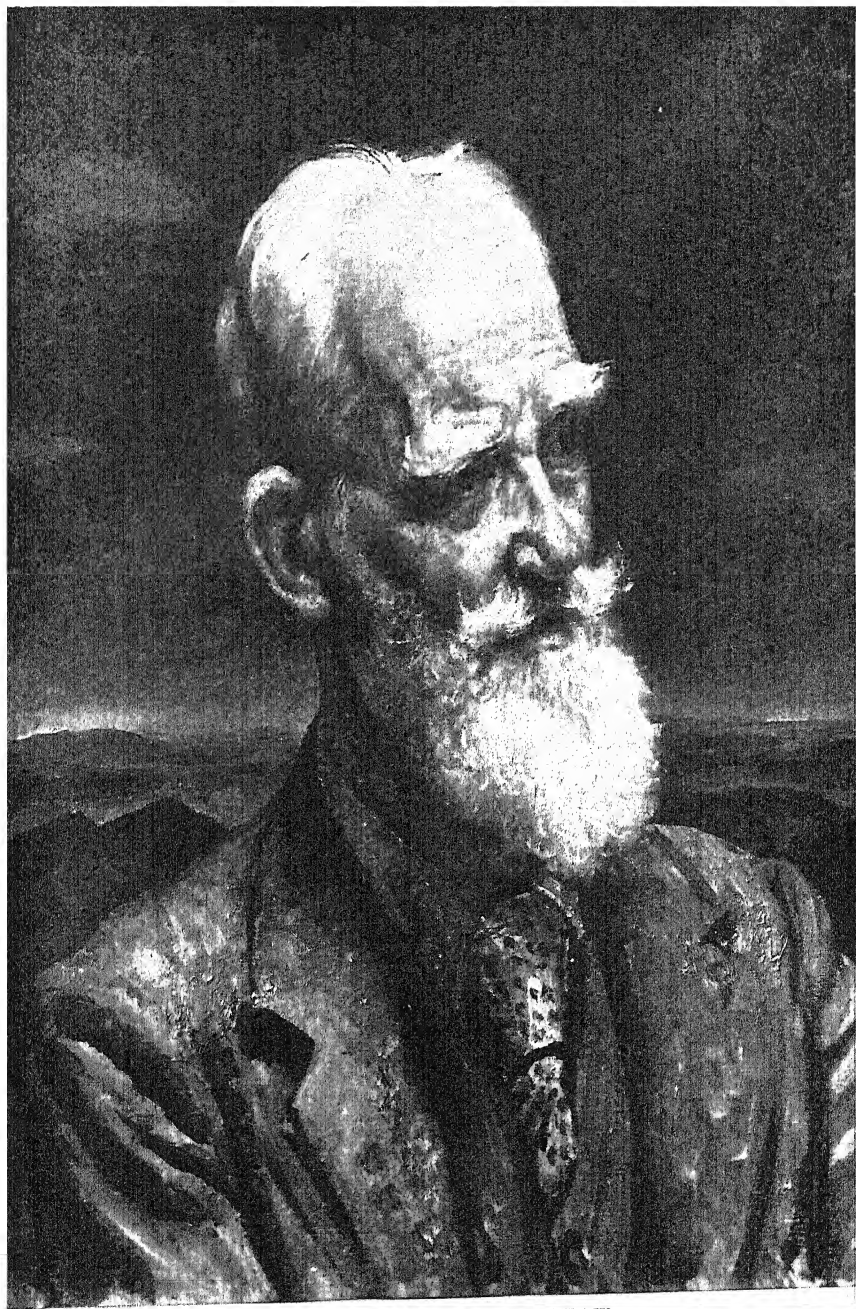
bought a picture of Elsie Scott on Hassan. The picture was a scheme of black, white, grey and blue, painted behind in the stable tent by electric light while the show was in progress.

One night while I was painting that particular picture tumbling practice was going on close by. A boy miscalculated the space for his swing-backs and landed right on me, knocking my easel over and nearly throwing me down. Another night, I was used as a centre for some trick that Carl was practising with Mary, whose great back quarters kept banging against me. I was as much part of the circus as anyone in the show, used to putting up with anything, living solely in its atmosphere, protected from any outside intrusion, cut off from outside association. I loved it for the uninterrupted chance of painting what I wanted most to do. The circus itself never lost its fascination, the multitudinous interest and constant change, the endeavour to accomplish the impossible. I became Circus—accepted in Circus as Circus for good and all—proud of it. I never wanted to do anything else again.

Harold again said, "You are mad—circus crazy." So I was. "Remember you are a painter, not a circus performer," he said. "You'd do better work if you'd remember that." It was just the same with the ballet, he said.

When with fisher-people, the theatre, the circus, or any other grade of society, I cannot withhold the vital interest that burns inside for the work they themselves do and what it means to them if they are sincere.

Painting, music, ballet, theatre, circus, art and physical skill, what joy to project oneself in each, to feel the daring of the acrobat, the control of the artist, in understanding and sympathy to live many lives in one!



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

1932



A MAN FROM MOUSEHOLE

1930

(This picture went down in the "Manuka" disaster)

CHAPTER XLIII
THE MONEY BOX

IN June of 1931 I went to St. Andrews to receive the honorary degree of LL.D.

Resi Keyser, who some years before had married Dr. Thomas Frazer of Aberdeen, came to stay with me at the St. Andrews Hotel. We renewed the old intimacy between us. Resi had not lost the beauty and brilliance that had made her the belle wherever she went when we were girls in Nottingham. As we walked the sandy shore that first evening we talked of those days and Staithes where she and Tante Anna Gutjahr used to join us.

The next morning Resi saw me to the gates of the University and then went to her seat in the old hall, while I went inside to be dressed in a black and scarlet hired gown.

Sir James Irvine touched us all with John Knox's cap as we knelt. When the ceremony was over we sat gowned and magnificent at the luncheon-tables placed down three sides of a beautiful hall. I was the only woman there and sat at Sir James's right.

Professor D'Arcy Thompson got up to speak, a grand figure, from whom eloquence poured. I was completely overcome when in his speech he said: "We are proud to boast that Dr. Johnson once sat in these halls; one day we shall be proud to boast that Dr. Laura Knight once sat in that chair." After the luncheon he took Sir James Jeans, also a recipient of the degree, and me to see St. Andrews, the great wall, the old town, the ruined abbey, the sea. We even saw some eider duck. The day was fair and fresh, the sky palest ultramarine with light wings of nebulous cloud spreading from horizon to horizon.

We had a real Scotch tea at Professor Thompson's very

old house, in it a spiral staircase, which turned to your right as you mounted backwards, instead of to the left, as would have been the case had it been built for defence, so as to leave the sword-arm free to use. This proved the house had originally been well within the boundaries.

Sir James Jeans was quiet, intensely interested in all. I do not remember his mentioning the word "star" once.

A big reception was held that evening at Sir James Irvine's house, a thrilling evening. The days were at their longest, the sea stretched in unbroken view through the long windows. Sir James Irvine was human, not frightening, as I had expected a man of great learning to be, but was full of fun, and wanted to know all about circus life, a world that seemed a long way off. Everyone asked me to tell about lions and clowns, horses and tents. Some of the men wore kilts. One laird gave me a pleat of his kilt to feel; it was more like wire in its hard texture than cloth made of the finest closely twisted worsted. His kilt, he said, had been worn by his ancestors as well as himself; although more than a hundred years old it was as stout as if made yesterday.

Next day my train crossed the border through wild hill and fell, and the savage country filled me with sick longing. It was hard to understand the finely built sandy-haired young farmer I got into conversation with.

I landed at Blackpool to find Ally at the station: "Just time to drop your things at the lodgings and see the finish of the show. I'm afraid you'll be disappointed. It isn't half what it was last year and the houses are dire."

I had bought second-hand a scarlet corded silk gown and white satin hood, which I had to take out of its tissue wrappings and there were yards and yards of it—we all tried it on in our sitting-room over the sweet-shop. Our landlord came in the white linen coat he wore to serve his cigarettes, chocolates and greenish-yellow lemonade from the enormous round glass bowl—he too must see my gown. Every night, when business closed, he came to our door and put his head

through: "Well, how was the show to-night?" "What have you got behind you?" asks Ally. "Well, was it a good house to-night?" "What's in that hand you're hiding behind your back?" asks Ally for the second time. "Good night all," says our landlord, closing the door. It was some weeks before Ally solved the mystery. It was his cash-box.

Ally had written, "You will like these rooms. There are three aspidistras here." When I got there I appreciated them, they were luxuriant. I painted one of them in front of the cream lace curtains at the bay window; framed in the scalloped edge of the opening in the middle were two public-houses, a tram was at the corner, and a group of weary, stout people were waiting with umbrellas, and girls in the latest beach pyjamas walking up the street. While I was painting, Ally would say, "I can't think why you want to paint a subject like that." "You wait," I said.

I worked again that year with Carmo's Circus, but without the zest of former years. The general depression was infectious. The circus went down and down and the big top had the indignity of being used for boxing on certain matinées. In a corner of the ground the expensive heating system lay rusting away.

The arrears of salaries grew enormous. Performers left in despair. Togare was too expensive to keep—he too went.

The less costly trainer who came in his place had the ring cages put up; all the lions were turned into it. He stood outside the bars to talk to and get familiar with the beasts. He approached the cage. Paris, who was on the other side, took one spring across the ring and landed on the bars, nearly bringing the whole cage down. He was again the man-eater he had been before Togare's friendship.

"It's as much as my life's worth to go in with that cat," said the man.

Feeding a lion is a costly business. Paris, useless, was sold to the Berlin Zoo. Togare, whenever he is near that city, goes to visit Paris and sits in his den petting him and

kissing his face. They used to rub noses through the bars when the lion was with our show.

The parting of these two had been heart-rending. It would seem that Paris knew something dreadful was going to happen, he was mopy as Togare wept over him. A week beforehand Togare's eyes had been swollen with crying.

There was no saving poor Carmo's Circus, which had set out in such high hope. Time came when all was auctioned. The Liberty and High School horses went with Captain Ankner, and Bart to the Tower Circus at Blackpool.

I have always wondered what happened to Tiny when Mary went away to Germany. June did not live long. Caesar, the big pale-coloured lion, had died of old age. He used to sit up, his head in the air, his right paw held high when "Rule Britannia" was played, for he seemed to know the majesty he represented.

The rest of the lions went with another circus; they toured England for a year or two. One morning they were all found dead in the room where overnight they had been stored. Fumes from a garage next door had reached and overcome them.

I knew the beasts' little tricks, and the two young ones had already started to grow manes and tufts of dark fur on their elbows. I had drawn and watched them, seen their moods and fancies day in, day out, for months, for years. I never knew till their tragic end how fond of them I had grown. I hate to think of that suffocating stench creeping through to kill them as they slept!

Carmo's own lovely train of three living-wagons was sold to a rich man, in which to spend each year a few days of his leisured life.

I have not been on the road with any circus since Carmo's broke up.

Each Christmas season, except one, I have worked at Olympia attending Captain Bertram Mills's magnificent

opening luncheons and afterwards in and out of show, stable and dressing-room.

My coat hangs on the nail by Whimsical's own in his room under the seating. The Buffer fills a cushioned chair; his eyes have an opalescent glaze, his muzzle has whitened, the shapely body has turned thick, stout and heavy. He flops off his chair for a titbit of liver, as we eat our mid-show tea. Whimsical's hour of rest in his darkened room is sacred now; while the whirring of roundabout and wheel sound outside he sleeps oblivious to the noise, familiar in his ears for close on seventy years. Now he never goes into the ring to mime, and his step has lost its jauntiness as he goes round the house with his poker. Under the clear white and red of his make-up is a very old and weary face, his wit unaged as he makes his ready replies.

I met Harry Lauder in Whimsical's dressing-room one night. When I apologised for touching his hand with my own, soiled with pencil sharpenings, he took it and shaking it firmly said, "Never mind, black hands make white shillings."

Christmas, 1933, Mr. and Mrs. Whimsical, Harold and I went to the Circus People's Reunion Dinner as usual; for many years we had sat together. Whimsical was a sick man that night; at parting he gave me a long kiss on the lips as if bidding good-bye for ever, and said, "It's the last time I'll be here." . . . I thought of the change which had come over him since the previous year, so jaunty had he been at the close—no sinister thought as he looked at the sprinkling of silver coins in the cloak-room saucer and said, "That's the best thing I've seen on a plate to-night." He was young that night, full of fun. To him life was either the extreme of gaiety or sadness, but sometimes comedy became tragedy, and tragedy had its humorous side.

When Ally and I visited him in hospital, his bed was screened with curtains from which three plush balls hung. He pointed to them. We bent close to hear the voice that whispered painfully, "I made the nurse find them for me—

that's the nearest they could get—my shop sign. All is welcome that comes here, but nothing is going to be redeemed!" Years before, when Ally was a very young girl, Whimsical had played father to her in a circus spectacle at Edinburgh called the "Texan."

I have Whimsical's letter telling me he has to go to hospital. "I may never come out again, I must keep my socks well pulled up," an expression he had picked up from me. "Pull up your socks, Notts"—a relic of my early girlhood when Harold and I were Notts supporters and went on Saturday afternoons to the Trent ground to see our team play.

Whimsical was a great man. His poker used at Drury Lane and the top-hat he wore in ordinary life, Mrs. Walker gave me to remind me of one of my dearest friends.

CHAPTER XLIV
MRS INGE'S ALBUM

FOR some years we have not missed the Malvern Theatrical Festival. Our first visits were paid when Barry Jackson still rented a house for his guests, and we walked the hills in the mornings, met on the terrace at midday to drink the waters or a cup of coffee, and discuss the play of the night before.

One year Hugh Walpole sat next to me at table; for two meals I managed to exist in the rarefied atmosphere of intelligent conversation; then, being able to bear pretence no longer, I said, "I have never read anything, I don't know anything and I am sick of pretending, so let's start all over again." This broke the ice and we all enjoyed being foolish.

Barry's house-party was chiefly made up of people from the theatrical and literary world. Among them were J. T. Grein, Gordon Bottomley, Daisy Kennedy, John Drinkwater, Scott Sunderland, Lady Rhondda, Irene Vanbrugh, Lascelles Abercrombie, Hugh Walpole, Gwen Lally, Mrs. Brockhurst, and a host of other *personages* that came and went.

Wee Georgie Wood took a film one year of an impromptu play, a bit of schoolboy fun; in this, after entrance to Barry's house had been refused him, G. B. S. fell backwards down the steps in his haste to get away from the rest of us, who were pushing him out.

Owing to a series of accidents we were not able to see the film the following year when G. B. S. came to show it one Sunday night. Instead, we sat round a table in the dining-room listening to G. B. S. talk about "Too True to be Good" with disarming modesty. The play had been performed in England for the first time the day before; and the

criticisms in the Sunday papers had not been too kind. The critics had had a very rough air-trip from London. They were all deadly sick.

Mrs. Inge showed a scribble of Dean Inge I had done in her album. G. B. S. turned to me and said, "I am offended you have never asked me to pose for you."

I agreed to fetch materials and paint a portrait the following week. Professor Strobel from Hungary was going to model a bust—we should both work together.

On the return journey from London I made acquaintance with a female journalist who was confidently expecting to obtain an interview with Shaw.

I went to the White Horse Inn, where I shared Phyllis and Eileen Shand's bedroom till Harold came a few days later. We shared the common dining-room at the "White Horse" with people from the theatre. Tubs of geraniums half filled the balcony outside and through the scarlet and green we saw the shops, the road below and miles of distant country. Opposite was a wine and spirit merchant's. Through the net curtains of the Georgian windows above the shop, the owner and his wife were to be seen every evening counting their receipts in an iron cash box after closing hour.

The Priory Gardens were crowded on the day after my return. Cameras rattled like machine-guns and autograph albums rustled their leaves like trees in a wind as G. B. S. sat on an iron chair talking to Phyllis; behind stood my journalist friend of the train.

"On no account approach him unless I can introduce you and he speaks first. Don't ask for an interview, that's hopeless—he won't give one," Phyllis had warned the journalist whom she had taken in charge. Impatient at being kept waiting, the newspaper girl pushed herself forward and said, "Mr. Shaw, will you give me an interview? Have you a message for me to send to America?"

All friendliness left G. B. S.'s face as he pushed back his chair with a scrape—"Go away. I have no message for

America," he shouted acidly and, when she persisted he repeated, "Go away," then promptly turned his back. Afterwards I mischievously asked the girl, "Did you get your interview?" She replied, "Yes, fine, enough to make a long article."

It is always a nervous business starting a portrait; Shaw's was no exception. The Press photographer who had come with Strobel rushed from point to point, snapping the great professor laying on his first clay in grand gesture, and the great author, his chair dangerously perched on a packing-case so small that his brogues projected over the edge. I longed for the assurance of the professor, isolated in his almost complete ignorance of the English tongue.

"Do you notice the projection at the base of my skull behind?" G. B. S. asked me. "Catherine of Russia had the same. I am told it means excessive sexual development." "Have you noticed how big my ears are? When I was a child my nurse used to hold the back of my petticoats, so that my ears should not act as sails." As he told these things the right eyebrow came down to hide that eye and the left curl of moustache lifted—one moment benevolence, the next demoniacal mischief.

These peculiarities are pointed out to the professor, who in frowning seriousness walks round to examine lump and feature.

"Plees talk him," the professor begged me every day. I talked for the sake of making our sitter talk—anything that came into my head, not caring what I said so long as the professor and I could get the expression we wanted.

"I have never listened to so much nonsense in my life," G. B. S. said when I told him of "Plees talk him."

"We always talk nonsense when we talk much—I too have talked nonsense," G. B. S. said to comfort me.

Scott Sunderland came in one day and Shaw criticised his acting—he was not affected as he should be when Ellen Pollock, who played the part of the vamp, turned her bare back on him. G. B. S. got off his throne to illustrate his

point, and Scott and he went through the lines. Shaw, taking the lady's part, coyly turned the back of his Norfolk coat, arched his long neck and poked his head over his shoulder till Scott was properly overcome at the sight. These rehearsals went on in deadly earnest.

It was difficult for modeller and painter to work together. Strobel needed to move his sitter for various views, and I wanted him to stay in one place. However, when the professor had gone and Mrs. Shaw had declared his bust wonderful, Mr. Shaw gave me extra sittings to finish the work.

After the casting the hall looked as if the roof had been lifted off in a snow-storm; spatters of plaster, litter of newspaper, paint rags and trodden pellets of clay strewn all over the floor. The sun tried to pierce the canvases put up to screen the windows, as G. B. S. sat, his arms folded, telling me of the day in Ireland when he and Charlotte were rowed across a lake to a mountain. Each scene was laid out in musical prose, but words that might never again be spoken were lost on me, for I was going through the torment of scraping out an ear to paint again; I must get it in the right place to give proper breadth of cheek.

"Who's going to clean up all this awful mess?" G. B. S. asked me at the end. I had already made arrangements for it to be done. "I am going to pay for it," said Shaw pulling notes out of his pocket, some of which he made me take. Professor Strobel had already given me his half share, so I found myself with two and six that did not belong to me. "It will pay the taxi to take your things back to the hotel," said Shaw, walking out to go home. However, soon after his car was outside waiting for me, so his chauffeur received the odd half-crown, which burned my pocket. Some days while Shaw was posing he sang airs from operas, and often we discussed painting. He had told me he often talked nonsense; he certainly did when he said he saw no reason why any picture should take more than a day to do.

The Festival over, Malvern seemed almost empty.

Harold and I, alone at the "White Horse," were sitting on the balcony, when Mr. and Mrs. Shaw and a stranger were shown in. "Another Shaw whom I have brought to see the portrait," said G. B. S. introducing a person of rather less than medium height, bronzed and wearing country clothes. I noticed that his chin was long, that his face had parallel sides and his piercing eyes were dark blue. He thought my portrait very like G. B. S. I talked to Mrs. Shaw, who was examining sketches pinned on the wall. I gave her the preliminary drawing for the poster, a caricature done for the London production of "Too True to be Good." A water-colour of geraniums, 'buses, shops and country done from our balcony, she wished to buy—it reminded her of the Malvern she loved. "Charge her a good big price for it," G. B. S. said on the quiet. "She's a rich woman."

The Shaws asked us to lunch with them that day. When they had left, Harold suddenly stopped in his pacing to exclaim, "I've suddenly thought who that was. I was puzzled all the time he was here—it was Lawrence of Arabia." . . .

We sat long at the table in the public room of the hotel where the Shaws were staying. I was between "another Shaw" and G. B. S. Lawrence seemed to have read every book that had been written, know everyone's pictures. He talked too of Arabia and said he had never seen mirage except when tired at the end of a day, while Harold and I made no sign we knew who he was.

Harold and I stayed on for the sake of the scrambles and walks on the hills we loved. At the theatre was a season of Noel Coward's plays, where we sat in the balcony once or twice with Mr. and Mrs. Shaw—G. B. S. laughed as loudly as any at the witty lines, but Mrs. Shaw was silent.

G. B. S. was licking stamps in the post office one day when I went in to send a telegram. We greeted and bade each other good-bye, and I was still writing when I heard a shout, "Laura," G. B. S.'s head was poked round the door and with

his naughtiest look he said, "Charlotte says that portrait you painted of me is the worst she has ever seen in her life; you made me a sincere man and all my life I have been an actor." Then he turned and ran off.

Last year I saw G. B. S. from the terrace of our hotel. Pleasant things were said about some work of mine he had seen at the R.A. and I told how delighted I was that he should have bought a water-colour from my exhibition. "You ought to feel flattered," he said. "It's the only picture I have ever bought."

The subject of the picture was an audience. I started it, not knowing what was going to happen. In one corner I drew a fatuous face, the brush and colour did the rest—all I thought of was a tale Harold Samuel had told me of someone saying to him, "I love Bach, he's so soothing."

A Canadian girl told me how one fine morning early, unable to bear her bedroom any longer, she had gone downstairs to find no one up and the front door locked; she had climbed out of her window to let herself down by dropping from the sill and fell right into G. B. S.'s arms—he was taking his early stroll. "Hello, do you always leave your hotel this way?" he asked.

An appropriate opening for one of the big man's own plays.

G. B. S. of Malvern Festival and Malvern Hills. All people stop to turn as the familiar figure strides up the town's steep streets.

In the simplicity of his room, Indian paintings and prints make distinction of the mantelshelf, "To have beautiful colour in the room," says Mrs. Shaw.

Their windows overlook two terraced lawns and right across the Severn Valley to the Cotswolds, thirty miles away.

On this late August day, the air is keen on the hills' smooth switchback; under a stunted hawthorn six newly clipped grey-white sheep find haven. The cries of children

tobogganing down a grassy mound, a terrier's sharp barking, voices of trippers climbing round from below are heard, and from the Priory Gardens snatches of a Viennese waltz come in disconnected blast.

"Here's Bernard," exclaims the donkey-woman as Shaw's grey and white turn a sloping path. "He's good to carry ten stone to the Beacon Top," she says of her wall-eyed white pony, who is tethered in the shed among the asses, all ready to be hired. We escape the raincloud that comes towering over a hill, to sweep as falling mist across the town beneath, obliterating crowded roofs, close-set chimney-pots and the dried-chocolate abbey's pinnacles. The streets, narrow, wet, glisten in silver streaks; up and down vermillion 'buses run, and folk under umbrellas.

In panoramic view from north to south, like a half-rolled map, fertile England's beauty lies in sunlit patch of stubble, farm, cōpse and snug woolly tree and countless spires of churches among distant towns' blue slates. Smoke from some burning weeds billows across a distant rise and a plume in colour of watered milk, rises from a tall chimney-stack.

Thunderous cumuli in solemn majesty show against intensest blue, rounded mountains of glowing white modelled with both tender and heavy tones of grey, all more static and solid seeming than land itself, as in glorious game shadow chases shadow.

CHAPTER XLV
"THAT I MAY SEE"

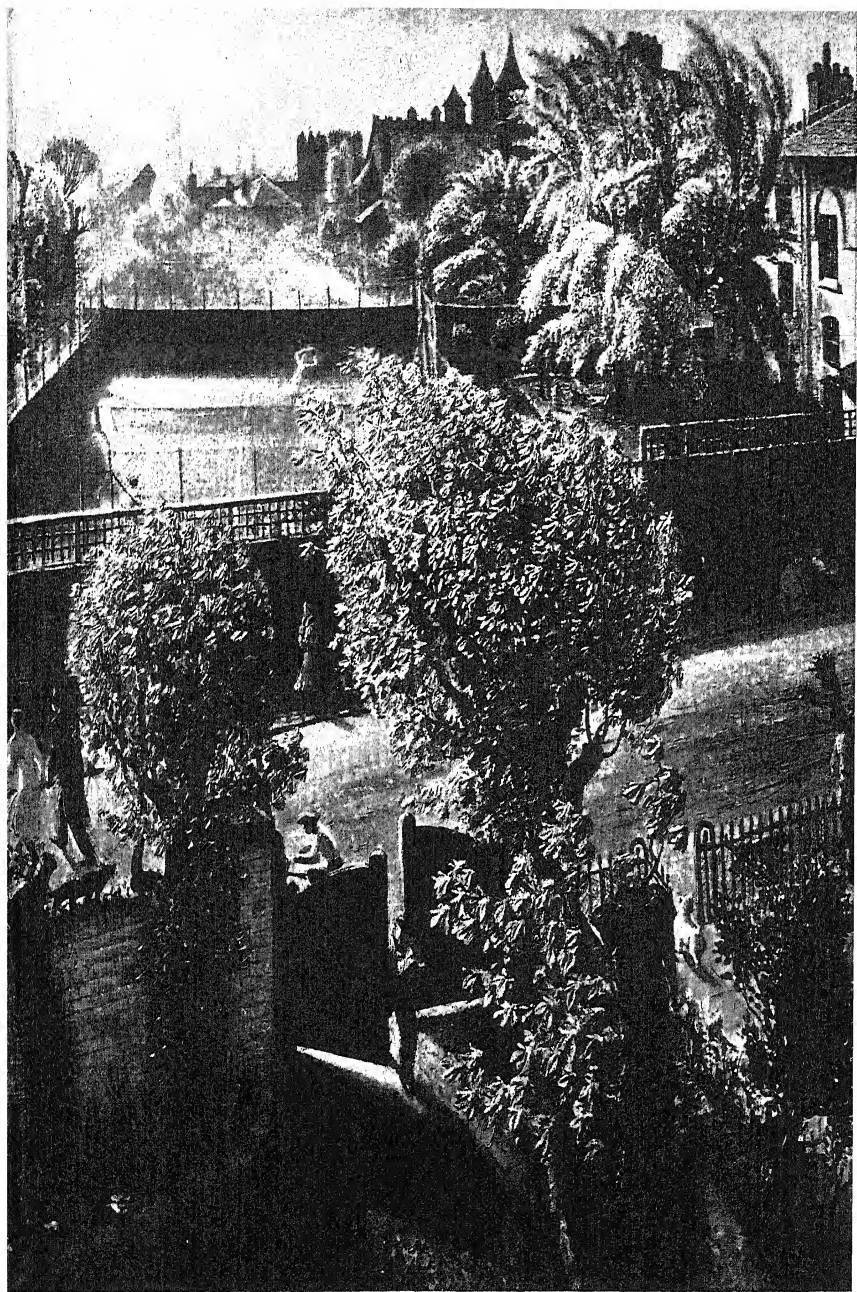
IN 1931 I went for the first time to the Oaks at Epsom. I sat with Mrs. Arnold Palmer in the grand stand.

Every year since I have worked in the crowd with Joe and Ally as protectors.

In 1932 Joe could not come. Ally and I left before the last race to avoid the rush, both of us laden with folding easel, satchel and portfolio of studies which perhaps accounted for the knots of people gathered near the station mistaking us for bookies—we had the sympathy of each group as we passed: "Oh, sorry to see you're leaving early," and one man said to me, "Never mind, ma, better luck to-morrow."

In 1933 I hired a car. Every day we found a different parking-place. Near Tattenham Corner, where we pitched on the last day, I climbed on to the roof to work. Perched up there, above the vulgarity, litter and the grand display below—working alone in such ineffable peace, I was half in the boundless space of ether filled seemingly with an exaltation of larks—half in heaven, half on earth. A car drew up next to ours—out sprang a portly man in business coat and bowler hat. "Come out, girls," he said graciously as he held his hand to the elderly ladies inside. He saw me, and strutted round in every captivating posture he could think of—I took pleasure in ignoring his evident desire to attract the artist's attention. "Are you taking photos?" he asked several times. I made no answer. At last he cocked his hat on one side, put his thumbs in his waistcoat sleeve-holes and said, "You won't take me will you?" "No, I will not," I assured him.

I climbed down later and sat in the car for a rest. Two



SPRING IN ST. JOHN'S WOOD

1933

gipsy children came begging; one had fair hair, fairer than her skin. She stood, crystal in hand, leaning gracefully on a door-jamb, and to keep her there so that I could memorise her line I had my fortune told—now was the bowler-hatted gentleman’s chance: “I see you are interested in fortune-telling,” he said, with the utmost self-assurance. “I believe in it too. I must tell you I am a pawnbroker from Pimlico. In my youth I had a shop in Pimlico; on the pavement outside I had a stand where I displayed a few wares. One day a gipsy woman came”—then he related a coarse tale, a chestnut, and went on: “We made a bargain—I should have my fortune told. And, madam, believe me or believe me not as you like, all she told me has come true. ‘Yes,’ she said, ‘you’ve got a lucky face; you’ll make a bit of money, not a very big fortune.’ Yes, I have, I’ve made a bit, and got a nice bit put by, just enough not to have to worry any more—not too much. I don’t want for a bit of comfort. ‘You’ll go away from Pimlico,’ she told me, ‘but you’ll move back—yes, you’ll come back,’ and so I have. I kept a public-house at Lambeth for a bit, but I’m back again in Pimlico. All she told me has come true. She said, ‘You’re teetotal now, but there’ll come a time when you’ll find you must take a glass of beer.’ I have. The time came just as she said, all she told me has come true.” As I looked at his purple complexion, I too believed in the gift of second sight.

Joe and Ally and I went again this year in Mr. Sully’s Rolls-Royce from Brixton—big enough to hold a thirty by twenty-five inch canvas. Although for a car it was so roomy, it was not a large studio, and often my view was blocked by rows of heads trying to watch me. One man said, “I suppose it’ll look better when its photoed.” That day changed from minute to minute as the sun worked round—showers spattered the glass, wind shook the car. I never saw the same thing twice. Working under such conditions, I can only rely on instinct for a guide, hoping that the subconscious will tell me what to do; eye and hand must work simultaneously. This year, in spite of an aching back,

cramped legs and a double light on my canvas, I felt in a glorified state and could withdraw myself from all misery of personal discomfort and the distraction and tumult outside—I again sensed growing power. I have been excited about my feelings ever since, and am longing for this book to be finished, so I can once again sling paint and dare things I have never tried.

I was encouraged to try similar work in the Paddock at Ascot; Dr. Crouch, with whom I was staying, had obtained permission from Lord Hamilton for me to make my pitch on the refreshment balcony. The day most interesting to me as a painter was a rainy one—all the mounds of umbrellas and mackintoshes that failed to cover the trailing chiffons and silks.

In 1933 I went to Haddon Hall again, to Derbyshire, to hills, to fields and winding stream, never to be forgotten.

On the way from the station I see the country and then Haddon, familiar and at the same time strange. The child who knew it was not I. But this is truly the country where I was born, the country we had all come from. The soil tilled by my forebears to grow the bread that has built my bone.

My car goes over the old stone bridge—something inside me contracts in a horrid lump. The last time I crossed, Mother, Nellie and Sissie were with me—I want to cry. No state to be in when received by His Grace and Violet, Duchess of Rutland, on the terrace of the Hall. On that terrace, I remembered Mother painting; I had helped her enlarge her study as a backcloth for a school play in which I acted.

Soon tea is announced, laid on a table near the steps down which Dorothy Vernon escaped. The Duke pours our tea from two brown earthenware pots, which braces me against overwhelming emotion, while I furtively scratch my ankles, for the midges are biting fiercely.

I told the Duke of the landlady who had rubbed her

Derbyshire neck with goose-grease. “Did it do any good?” he asked. We found the farm where we used to live and the Duke promised to take me to see if the people would remember our having been there. It would have been pleasant to see again the old kitchen in Rowsley village, where Mother and we three children had so often eaten at the farm bench. We were never able to go, for I was working too hard. Several evenings we picnicked up the Lathkil Dale. I watched the Duke throw a fly for the trout which for centuries had made the stream famous. As I stood on the bank I thought of years before when Mother and I had painted the Lathkil stream.

I was told that the old mill and pond were still up the valley. The Duke said, “I have never been up so far.”

I told of scratching our names on a pane in Dorothy Vernon’s chamber, but they were not to be found. Many of the household searched for them but the panes had been mixed when the casements were re-leaded. The window in that room looked just as it did when Nellie had sat on the seat for Mother to paint.

My Uncle Arthur Peter Bates died this year—one of the last links to break. He had taken our father’s place.

When, as the youngest of a large family, he had come into the world, his mother having exhausted almost every name she knew said, “Peter shall be his second name,” and everyone thought it comic, such an old-fashioned name.

There was kinship in his and my natures. In childhood I imitated his powerful voice when I wanted my own way.

He was a violent man, intolerant of anyone who did not agree with him. In an argument he shouted till people stood in the street to listen.

When nearly eighty years old he told me, “I have been rubbing up my Latin.” He loved knowledge for its own sake, a student to the end.

Uncle’s chief interest had been the soil and what it could bring forth by toil with spade and hoe. After leaving

France, where he had spent much of his life, he gave himself to his garden, wherein no stone or weed was to be found.

The seeds and plants were his friends. He handled delicate roots without breaking a single fibre. His joy was the manure heap. His love, the wild birds that came when he called "Tommy, Eustace, Harry," and, when they were shy, "Crackpot."

It was a wonder how, as an old man, he could stand on his wasted legs, in his hand a match-box full of pellets of cheese, which he flicked out with finger and thumb as the birds came close, sometimes perching on hand and arm.

When in his last illness I went to him, Kent had covered herself in white, the cherry and plum and the pear were at breaking point under their weight of bloom. Uncle's own garden and orchard were in gala dress.

While he was drawing his last breath, close to the window of his home, from club to club of the pollarded limes outside, a fat bird hopped, impatiently waiting with head cocked, as it seemed to ask, "Aren't you coming out to-day?"

I have lately returned from Glamorgan, where I painted Allan Renwick on Oakie, his horse, both old friends.

It must be done before the leaves come out, for Allan is wearing his pink hunting coat. A week of wildest weather, rainstorms that drench us every half-hour, a fresh pitch each day to avoid the shifting half-gale, Oakie covered in blankets, a corner removed at a time, Allan's face so blue and stiff with cold above his smart white stock, he cannot smile as he walks bored Oakie round and round me.

The last few years have seen further work, further experiments and study after complete recovery from a broken knee, but for which this book would not have been started.

On the scrubbed table of the balcony at 16 Langford Place lies a pile of papers covered with scribbled notes. I wish Harry Lauder were here. My hands and arms are covered with pencil sharpenings—I might have been drawing

for months. The creepers hanging in festoon from above, and the chestnut trees in summer leaf almost hide the flats that block our view of old St. John's Wood, which I painted two years ago, "Spring in St. John's Wood." The pear trees have gone, the tennis court has gone.

On the table the tea-cloth is spread. Harold sits in the high-backed old Windsor chair which he bought for five shillings from Sneinton Market, when, as a boy, he had his first studio in Nottingham. He is reading a Wild West story—one he has scorned me for buying.

The couch where I sleep is to my left; on its blue cover lie my manuscript case and sheets of paper that will not keep themselves sorted, a letter from Sissie telling me about her son Bob, a pair of spectacles too is there, and an oilskin tobacco pouch leaning against an old pipe that Bernard Walke forgot to take when he went out. Thrown over the railings of the balcony behind the window-box is Grandma Bates's striped silk Indian shawl, bought close on a century ago from her friend the other smuggler.

Sweet memories come of warm, misty days in Mousehole by the sea when blanketed in film of grey the violet-field exhales its scent to reach full half a mile away.

The village lies below our cottage steps of rough-fashioned granite, they turn and twist past little lawn through bank of flower riot.

Outspread beneath, roof after roof in confusion mix, the snug circle line of pier and rail is draped in loop of blackish net and coil of rope spotted with ochre lump of cork.

Hands in trousers pockets, men ashore pace up and down in twos and threes; here one stands in idle pose his leg flung over the harbour rails. Women go from shop to shop to fill their brown string bags or gossip as they scratch the bare elbows of their folded arms; children in the water play.

Queer sounds are heard as oar strikes rowlock in blunt wooden rhythm; 'bus engine whirrs around the corner-bend;

sea-gulls scream in raucous note, darting in flare of white to scavenge all scraps of fish; above, jackdaws caw and flop and perch on red, yellow or black chimney-pot in jerk of clumsy, jagged wing.

From our high-set window bay we look down upon the Bay, protected by the Lizard arm that runs in long line of hill to border all; distant fields we see, set among the wild, pale patches of green or gold and tiny squares of distant farm or fishing-place or seaside town marked with strip of whitish beach; against it stands the Mount's pyramid, that at the whim of each passing cloud is turned to light or dark.

Together Gol and I on our chequered cloth lay our knives and plates, plonk down in clatter the wooden platter, on it a big white loaf. Harold in the kitchen with deft stroke of fork folds an omelette round some fresh-boiled leeks.

The long morning's work is done, we eat before our walk, over jut and crag and along the rocks we go, where wave in lack of ruth beats and beats again and draws back smooth for fresh strength to beat anew, to burst and spatter in fletcher of spray, or lie in devilish tempting calm as in and out it swings its monstrous weight.

To the rock side of a pool anemones cling like clots of blood, little bull-headed fish dart from growth to growth of strange fanged weed as in the heat of day we strip to plunge into the sun-warmed depths.

On the sheltered slope above, the thickset limes are sticks of ghostly white when in late winter the first daffodil blows, nodding its trumpet head. Behind a wall of loose piled stones a trickle runs, wet and soggy here in wild patch of uncultured growth of nettle that stings our sunburnt legs.

On the hedge-wall inland, the gorse bush in grotesque strength creaks in the wind of a winter's night. Comes a shaft of day—stick and spine are seen, formless, flecked with yellow buds, half closed, till sun in early warmth makes each brown sheath from its flower drop to form a flaming crown against the sky; yet it shall burn, through stress of

storm, till summer brings fruition, and in the August heat a ping is heard; power of birth is flung as each seed would in fallow lie, to sprout again and push its fuzzy head.

When iron has rusted and stone split, when granite decays and has to powder turned, fit only to make a pot—yet the gorse in dusky green and gold will force up its gracelessness and spread its scent, smokeless it again will burn, when Nature has swept down man’s proudest tower; yea, when hills have changed their shape, and when all that now is, is not.

I have been privileged to hear the penniless plan beggary with penniless, success compare success. I have seen painter work with painter, actor rehearse to actor. I have heard poet commune with poet, I have listened to musician play to musician. } Only a few months ago I heard Jan Smetterlin interpret Chymanowski to Chymanowski himself, and Myra Hess sat by.

With Rae, Ethel Robertson, with Doris Keane I have often discussed the relationship between our arts. With a clown, or with a poet such as Conrad Aiken, I have spoken of the bond that holds those together who search in diligence and execute in verity. But a short while since Conrad, in Harold’s studio, turned to me—“What do you think, Laura?” Bernard Walke who was with us had asked, “Did you ever feel you would like to lie down and let others walk over you?” Humility was our theme. We all agreed that without it no great work could be done.

Something inside the artist drives him, a power that transcends himself, and only in the soil of complete humility can an artist grow—I am blind, I would see; I am deaf, I would hear; I am a little child, I would know.

Conceived in humility and awe, born in pain—thus Art comes forth.

Of the extra sense that is the artist’s fearsome possession, I must speak, which running parallel with other experience, makes him live two lives in one, for even when in uttermost

abandon, he looks into his love's eyes, his artistic consciousness must perforce make note of them, not for their special beauty, but for the shape's own sake—recording—recording—never ending, against his very will maybe, perhaps against his conscience—though the hangman waits and the world topples—in the midst of terror—tragedy. . . .

The first creature who seeing, hearing, expressed his thought in scrawl on stone or rhythmic beat, marked man's development, others through him saw and heard.

Why the artist is born we do really know; we know that from the beginning of man's creation he has been here to put his divine vision into concrete form, marking the difference between man and the beast.

Fashions in art come and go. Appreciation of individual work waxes and wanes. But the fact that expression of thought is essential to the human race is as certain as returning spring.

I would tell of the glory of each unfolding day, when in new experience and open sight our souls grow, spread and bear fruit. My ambition is—that I may see as a painter should, and seeing plumb the depths of both big and small, that understanding and sympathy may grow.

I would wish to keep my joy in both little and big things—in a dewdrop lying in the cup of a young plant, a kitten's filmy eyes, I would keep the ecstasy that spring brings, when she comes to powder the grey branches with white and speckle with fair colour the fiercely bursting green, while in the hedgerow young aspen wands turn and twist their leaves like silver flowers against the April sky.

I would enjoy the languor that comes with summer's drooping bough and heavy clump of green, all cluttered with red, yellow, blue and pink.

When autumn breezes in gentle undulation wave the standing corn, an ochre mat on which the sun may in glory lie, I would find shelter in the stooks and munch the ripened wheat.

I would be braced by winter's ruthless strip and tear, when

each root lies at rest, till sap runs new again and each seed cracks its shell.

We are here to learn both light and dark, without one the other cannot be. Black shows up the white, purple enhances yellow, rough gives value to smooth.

I am thankful to have known the tasks and struggles of common life, joy and despair like any other mortal. I am just a hard-working woman, who longs to pierce the mystery of form and colour, and with full heart add a mite to the treasure of this world, the treasure which makes man's very existence; without it he would not be man, for he still is blind, his vision registers, but does not always touch his consciousness to the fullness of enjoyment. The sun can gild the manure heap or the battered ash-bin and make of them objects of glory as it can of the flaky sunset clouds. Had Turner never lived, should we have noted them? But for Rembrandt should we have seen the pathos of some old Dutch merchant? Should we have found music in common sounds of life had musicians never been? Could we sympathise with the mean and vulgar if Shakespeare had never drawn Shylock or Falstaff? It is the artist's unconscious mission to make of the world a richer place, that others through his gift may share his vision. The world is full of undiscovered beauty—no petty scene but can be glorified in the eyes of him who can see it truly. Above all I wish that my eyes may be opened and that I may learn to see.

THE END

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